

**WHAT SAITH THE SPIRIT UNTO THE CHURCHES?**

**Discourse by Brother Isaac Hoskins**

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”—Rev. 3:22

**M**Y FRIENDS: It is a special joy to me to be with you, and I esteem it a rare honor and privilege to address this Convention. I have stood before the brethren on this rostrum many times in the past, the last occasion I believe was something like twenty years ago. But in some respects I regard the present privilege more highly than any previous occasion. It is with commingled emotions of joy and sadness that I am undertaking to speak to you this evening: joy, indeed, that so many of the Lord's people are sufficiently of one mind at this time to gather in this place, long years ago made sacred by the presence of the Lord and the wonderful ministry of our beloved Brother Russell. It is truly a cause for thanksgiving that the brethren assembling at this Convention, do so in the consciousness of the high privilege of exercising their God-given liberties to individually think and believe for themselves and to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences. There is a sadness, too, my friends, as we mingle here and to some extent recall the past; most crucial trials and tests have overtaken the Lord's people in these recent years that have caused much pain and heart-searching. Some have endured and run well and some have not. Yet as we realize that our Father in heaven is still at the helm, there is no reason for dismay or alarm; but every reason for quietness, confidence and peace.

The theme that I am undertaking to discuss at this time may be stated in either one or two ways: First, “If Christ Came to Church Today,” or, “What Saith the Spirit Unto the Churches.” We may be sure that if the Savior appeared visibly in our midst today to address the Church, He would, without doubt, explain and present to us the mind of the Spirit; in other words, we would hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.

Come with me now, friends, and let us turn the wheels of the great clock of the Ages back nineteen centuries. We are now in vision taking our place in that most hallowed land of all the earth. We are by the River Jordan; a remarkable personage passes before us, and yielding Himself to John the Baptist. He is buried in Jordan's wave. There immediately follows a marvelous demonstration of the power from on high; a light from heaven and a manifestation in the form of a dove, accompanied by the voice, “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” It is none other than the Son of God. Quietly He takes His departure and retires in solitude to the wilderness. Many days and nights are spent in the contemplation of heavenly things. He is dwelling in the very presence of His Father. He is endeavoring to read the mind of God as it has to do with the great mission that He has come to work out. Sore temptations are permitted to come to Him to test His innermost spirit and to determine the depth of His obedience and loyalty.

“And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of Him through all the region round about. And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all. And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought

up: and, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto Him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And He closed the book, and He gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him. And He began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bare Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son? And He said unto them, Ye will surely say unto Me this proverb, Physician, heal Thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Thy country. And He said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian. And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath rose up, and thrust Him out of the city, and led Him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast Him down headlong. He passing through the midst of them went His way.”—Luke 4:14-30.

Such is the sacred narrative of how He who spoke as never man spake, presented Himself to men, and for the first brief moment was hailed as one illustrious and wise. But when He plainly declared the truth and the Father's will they saw no good, nothing to desire, but everything to condemn and reject. The narrative tells us of how the Son of God entered the synagogue, the church of His time, and of what happened in consequence.

In all the annals of human experience there is one blot upon the page that stands out in bold relief, darker than all the rest; and when at last the book of evil is finished and the story of sin is ended, that one page will still exceed all others in horror and blackness. It is none other than that which records the rejection and murder of the Savior of the world. He was sent from the court of Heaven as the most distinguished visitor that the eyes of man have ever beheld; He came as the well beloved Son of God, the Friend to man; He came with a heart full of sympathy and compassion; He came to help and to bless; He came utterly divested of every selfish purpose, with no other desire than that of revealing the love of God and uplifting humanity. From the presence of God came this well beloved Son to accomplish this great mission. But they knew Him not; He was despised and rejected and put to death. Looking back upon the horrors of sin and the tragedies of evil that fill our histories, we can find a way of excusing the general sinful state of man; but this one act of doing away with and of murdering the Christ of glory, who knew no sin and gave offense to none, has no resource for excuse. Yet the infinite love of God has planned that even this shall be forgiven.

Long centuries have rolled by since the Savior entered that Church at Nazareth, and the generation of our time professing godliness say, Oh, for shame that the Son

of God should have been so mistreated and rejected! Yet, can the present generation professing to be God's chosen, successfully claim advantage over the Jewish Church of our Lord's time? Would the Savior receive any better treatment should He appear to His people now, as He did to those Jews in the synagogue at Nazareth, nineteen centuries ago? There is this peculiarity about human experience: History in the making does not seem to the people of the time just as it does to succeeding generations. Consequently, it is a common thing for the people of one generation to look back upon those of preceding times, when some crisis occurred, and wonder why the people acted the way they did, why they chose such an unwise course. The explanation is that in looking back upon humanity's doings in earlier times, we are not in possession of all the details, facts, and circumstances, and are not in a position to form mature judgment; and so it sometimes seems to us that we would not have made the mistakes that an earlier generation made, had we been upon the scene. But the history of the world shows that the tendency of human nature has been pretty much the same in all the ages of man's experience. Thus we often hear it said that history repeats itself; and by this is meant that the conduct of man in the different generations of human history, has been repeated again and again under the same existing conditions and circumstances.

These observations we are making this evening, friends, and endeavoring to apply the lessons of the past, [is] that we may be profited spiritually and that we may the better determine our position before the Lord as members of the Church of the last times. Of this we are confident that those chosen to Divine favor and fellowship and membership in the Church of Christ in this dispensation, are accorded a very prominent place in the Bible, particularly in the Scriptures of the New Testament. We are all agreed that the special feature of the Plan of God as it has to do with this Age, is the preparation and making ready of the Church to be glorified together with her Lord and Master. Throughout the ministry of our Lord we find splendid and repeated evidences of His special interest in and attention to those who were to form the nucleus of His Church. In the prayer that He uttered near the close of His earthly life, He declared to the Father that His petitions were particularly for those whom the Father had given Him and who had been called out of the world. Then, after the resurrection of our Lord, as He was about to take His final leave, at the time of His ascension, He reassured His anxious disciples respecting His personal love and care, saying, Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the Age.

A little later in the history of the primitive Church, the Master confirms this sacred promise. In the revelation given to St. John we find this glorious truth vividly portrayed. The beloved John tells us that he found himself an exile on the Isle of Patmos, because of the faithfulness in the service of the Master and His Truth. He tells of how the Lord turned the occasion into one of great honor and privilege to himself. While it was in behalf of the Church as a whole that the revelation was given him, yet we may be assured that the Apostle's own spirit was greatly strengthened and refreshed. The Apostle relates how it was upon the Lord's day, the first day of the week, when it all happened. A great trumpet voice was heard behind him; he turned to see who and what it was. And being turned, he saw the Church of Christ; not exactly in those words, yet the language is without doubt of that import—"I saw seven golden candlesticks." Nor are we left to do any guessing or theorizing on the point of what this vision represents. Our own opinions are not needed, for we have

the Master's own interpretation of this prefiguration: "The seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven Churches."

Thus we have the suggestion conveyed to us at once in the opening of the Revelation, that the essential theme of the visions of the Revelator, is the Church of Christ, for this was the very first thing that the Apostle saw. But our interest in the matter becomes all the more absorbing as we read that, "I saw . . . in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of Man." The description can have but one meaning, one significance—the lesson is that of Christ's constant presence with His Church throughout the Age. The symbolism seems to suggest that the seven golden candlesticks were seven individual and separate lampstands, probably in the form of a circle, so that the Son of Man could be seen standing in their midst. He was clad in the vesture of the priest for the purpose of performing the priestly service and ministry in His Church. Dwelling in the midst of the lampstands, speaks of Christ abiding with His Church and exercising Himself in a priestly ministry, supervising the affairs of His people, causing the light of Truth to shine out and in every way looking after the spiritual life and interest of His faithful Church.

The fulfilment of all this striking symbolism is found in the office and work of the Holy Spirit, from Pentecost unto the present time, and unto the complete end of the Age. In the closing hours of His earthly life, Jesus foretold what was to be the order of the Age: He explained to His followers that His departure would not mean that they would be forsaken, but that He would send the Comforter, the Spirit, to guide them into all truth, to show them things to come, and to abide with them even unto the end of the Age.

As the great Head of the Church Himself, our Lord Jesus must receive the unction from heaven before He was prepared for His mission, and as we read concerning Him that "Jesus returned into Galilee in the power of the Spirit," so the faithful members of His Body must be partakers of that same unction from on high; and through the power of the Spirit the Church was originally instituted and began her mission.

We find therefore that in the early Church the first and important consideration was, What was the mind of the Spirit; What spirit are ye of; Have ye received the Holy Spirit; and, What saith the Spirit unto the churches? There were no tests applied in the primitive Church along the line of harmony with or subordination to a self-constituted leader or teacher, or with a group of leaders, or with any kind of a human organization, arrangement or system. Disciples of Christ were plainly taught that they had but one Head and Master as well as Teacher, and that was the Savior Himself. They were taught the necessity for being in personal touch with and in subjection to His will; and the test in those days was whether or not one had believed in Christ unto full surrender, followed by a reception of the Holy Spirit.

In one place where the Apostle Paul journeyed, the question was raised as to whether or not the Holy Spirit had been received. And the reply was, We have not so much as heard that there is a Holy Spirit. Mark you, friends, these were not heathen idolaters, nor unbelieving Jews who gave this answer. They were professing Christians and had received a measure of instruction from some who professed to be teachers of the religion and doctrines of Christ. Yet the professing believers here had to make this sad confession that they knew nothing about the Holy Spirit. We fear that there have been those throughout the Age, and many in our own time, who, if

they would humbly and honestly confess the facts, would admit that though professing Christ and professing to have been taught by some who claimed to be teachers, they had not yet really known or experienced the life and power of the Holy Spirit. And without that holy power there can really be no spiritual life or relationship with Christ.

In the early portion of the Book of Revelation seven messages are addressed to the seven churches. Here again we are dealing with the symbolism of the one Church as a whole, divided into seven different epochs or stages of her history. There were, of course, the seven local churches by those names given, in the Apostolic period, but they were evidently intended to prefigure or represent the entire Church in her larger experience, from the beginning unto the end of the Age. Those seven messages sent to the seven churches were evidently intended to portray the general trend and condition of the professing people of God all along through the Age. In some of those messages the Savior commends and approves the works of His followers; in others, He disapproves and rebukes what He sees of evil, worldliness and wrongful practice. The messages throughout are ever and always sounding the note of warning, admonishing to faith and obedience as well as giving the word of sympathy and cheer— “hold fast till I come.” Significant, indeed, is the fact that every one of the seven messages concludes with the solemn admonition, “He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches;” thus seeming to say to us that the all-important and vital consideration is to hear and heed the voice of the Spirit, no matter what the cost shall be and no matter what human voice or combination of human voices may attempt to lead us to the contrary.

My friends, let the great truth, the great fact, be well understood and received, that **inasmuch as the Church was instituted and started on her way in the beginning of the Age through the Holy Spirit, that was evidently intended to be the only means, the only channel and source of her strength, guidance and support, even to the very end of her earthly pilgrimage.** If the Church commenced her existence through the power of the Spirit, how surely shall she finish her work and conclude her earthly journeying through the power of that same Spirit! Further, shall we not consider that whatever there has been of failure or defeat in the professing Church of Christ, is due to the failure on the part of professing believers to heed the voice of the Spirit and walk in obedience thereto? May we not, in fact, solve all our difficulties and realize the solution to all our problems in the Church of today, from the standpoint of the office and work of the Spirit of God? Surely as in the case of the Apostolic Church, success of a spiritual character attended the brethren and their labors and ministry wherever and whenever the voice of the Spirit was obeyed: so the Church of the last times will realize success and victory in her service and ministry in so far as the Spirit of Christ is received and obeyed. Again, just as we find worldliness, the works of the flesh and general apostasy revealed in one or another of the stages of the Church’s history, because the voice of the Spirit has not been heard and obeyed, so we shall realize failures and apostasy in our midst, if we neglect to hear and obey what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Dear brethren, what saith the Spirit unto believers of these last times? Or, if Christ should walk literally and visibly into our midst today, what would He say, and what would it mean to us? Surely these are considerations and questions to which we can afford to give our most careful and sober contemplation. Our sanctification of the

Spirit and preparation for joint-heirship with Christ in His Kingdom represent the great essentials that we all seek; and no thought is more purifying or sanctifying in its influence than that of imagining or seeing ourselves in the very presence of Him “who hath His eyes as a flame of fire” and who is able to read the very thoughts and purposes of our hearts.

It was some thirty-five years ago that a gentleman by the name of Howard, occupying a seat in the Congress of the United States, wrote a book that was most interesting and that was given a wide circulation at the time, entitled, “If Christ Came to Congress.” Apparently the object of the writer was to expose and hold up to the light of Christianity the evils and corruption that threatened our great law-making bodies at that time. The perfection and holiness of the Savior were held up to view in contrast with the wickedness of men, in order to drive home the lesson all the deeper.

It was at that same time that another gentleman by the name of Stead wrote a book concerning the second great city of our land, “If Christ Came to Chicago.” This author evidently had the same design as the other. He was endeavoring to sound a warning with regard to the overwhelming wickedness that threatened so many people of the great city. He, too, presented the life of Christ in its brightest colors, in order to emphasize and magnify the horrors of evil and crime, and thus so impress a much needed lesson upon the minds of men.

Singularly though it may seem, it was about thirty-five years ago that a certain great man of God passed away in the city of Boston. He left a very fine record of true piety and Christian living; and his spiritual ministry exerted a wide influence upon many Christian people. In the Memoirs of this man of God, there is a chapter entitled, “When Christ Came to Church,” and it is related how in his early ministry he had an experience that influenced the remainder of his life. It is said that one Saturday evening, just after the preparation of his discourse to be delivered the following day, being weary from the labors, he fell asleep. He had a dream in which he saw himself the next day, on Sunday, standing in the pulpit of his church and going through all the proceedings of the service. Just as the service had opened, all the seats of the church being filled, and as he was about to commence delivering his sermon, there entered the door at the rear, a man of peculiar and striking appearance. He walked slowly down one of the aisles as though looking for a seat, and finally a man arose and showed the stranger a seat. Then as the services proceeded, the speaker saw the eyes of this stranger fastened upon him and so continued in that attitude during the entire discourse. The appearance of this stranger was described as of one intensely serious and having rested upon him a weight of great responsibility. The minister had resolved during his discourse that he would make for the stranger at once at the conclusion of the service to form his acquaintance. The service over, he made for the stranger, but when he reached the place where he had been seated, he found that he had gone. The gentleman with whom the stranger sat, remained behind however; and approaching him with great eagerness, the minister asked, “Can you tell me who that stranger was who sat in your pew this morning?” And in the most matter of course way, he replied, “Why, do you not know that man? It was Jesus of Nazareth.” With a sense of the keenest disappointment he said, “My dear sir, why did you let Him go without introducing me to Him? I was so desirous to speak with Him.” And with the same cool and indifferent air, the gentleman replied, “O, do not

be troubled. He has been here today, and no doubt He will come again.”

Then the minister tells of how in his dream there came an indescribable rush of emotion. His entire soul became aflame with questions that were turned back upon and related to himself, and he said to himself, I wonder what the Savior thought of our sanctuary, its gothic arches, its costly stained windows, and its magnificent and powerful organ. I wonder how He was impressed with the music and the order of the worship. To use the minister's own language, “We speak of a momentous occasion. This, though in sleep, was recognized as such by the dreamer—a lifetime, almost an eternity of interest crowded into a single solemn moment. One present for an hour who could tell me all I have so longed to know; who could point out to me the imperfections of my service; who could reveal to me my real self, to whom, perhaps, I am most a stranger; who correct errors in our worship to which long usage and accepted position may have rendered us insensible. While I had been preaching for a half hour He had been here and listening who could have told me all this and infinitely more—and my eyes had been holden that I knew Him not; and now He had gone.”

Other questions came crowding into the minister's mind while yet in his dream: He wondered what Jesus had thought of his specially trained choir, some of the members of which did not even make any profession of Christianity and were paid for their singing. Then there were those in the church who were well to do in this world's goods and were paying highly for their pews, but the Savior as He entered the church found no place reserved for such as Himself.

The minister awoke from his dream, apparently with a new and happier vision of his life before him and his ministry. New resolves were put into operation, resulting in important changes and modifications in his manner of serving Christ. He dismissed his trained choir and made such changes as he thought would more nearly harmonize with the conception and will of His heavenly Master.

My friends, it seems to me that we all draw some helpful and profitable lessons from what is thus related of this minister and his dream. We also too frequently find ourselves lost in the routine and the customary course of procedure and seem to so easily forget the solemn truth and facts of life that if we are truly Christ's disciples we are living and serving in His very presence. We need also to call upon our faith and our imagination and put ourselves in the very presence of God and permit Him to examine our lives, permit Him to look into the secret recesses of our hearts to see if there is any unclean thing or unchaste or improper practice in our life, that we may truly walk with Him in white.

Again I ask, How would Jesus Christ be received by us in this auditorium tonight? Suppose I had some way of knowing certainly that He was going to walk visibly into our presence here, and then while I am yet speaking, I should turn to the door yonder and see Him coming and say, “There, friends, comes Jesus now. He is just walking in the door.” Every one of you would turn to the door with the most thrilling interest; and while you were wondering if He would take His place upon this platform, I would surely vacate this position and we would all insist that the Master should speak to us, and how wonderful it would all be! But, friends, let us suppose the case were different and that Jesus of Nazareth should walk into this room tonight in disguise and we would not know it were He, then how would it be? Really, would you and I deserve any particular credit for receiving the Savior here tonight if we knew it were He?

Suppose today Jesus were to walk up the steps of yonder Catholic cathedral, and suppose the priest and the people were in some way made aware of the fact that it was verily Jesus Christ, would they not also gladly receive Him with open arms and give Him the most honored seat in their midst? And would they deserve any special credit for such treatment of the Master if they knew beforehand that it were He? But imagine the Lord walking into that cathedral in disguise, without the priest or the people knowing or having any idea that it was He; and then imagine Jesus walking before the people in that cathedral and beginning to expound the great truths that at once reflected the corruption of the Catholic institution, how long do you think the Savior would last in that cathedral? No longer than it would take officers or those in authority to hurl Him out of their midst onto the street.

But let us remember, brethren, that our Catholic friends are not the only people that would misunderstand and mistreat the Son of God should He walk into their midst in disguise. He would receive practically the same treatment in all the great Protestant bodies that He would receive at the hands of the Catholic Church. Any of them would gladly hail His presence if an angel would announce to them and prove to them that it was verily Jesus. But let Him appear to them in disguise and declare His Message, the result would be altogether different.

Now we will bring this lesson a little nearer home. Here is the great body of Present Truth people gathered during the past fifty years from all quarters of Christendom these people have had much advantage every way over all other branches of Christendom, having been admitted into a knowledge of the Divine Plan of the Ages and having seen great light above others. Again we ask, If our Master, Jesus, were to walk into a great gathering of Truth people in disguise and should stand up before them and begin to expound the Scriptures as He did to those people in the city of Nazareth long ago, would He be received and acknowledged, or how would it be? I fear, dear friends, that there is but one answer: the facts as we know them today speak louder than words; and I am confident that Jesus Christ would not last any longer today in the assembly of a great gathering of so-called Truth brethren than He would if He should visit the Catholic Cathedral in disguise; He would receive the same treatment.

Do I need to recall those significant words of the Master Himself: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, my brethren, ye had done it unto Me." From this, the Divine standpoint, of viewing the situation, how often has Jesus been rejected by those who have borne His name through the past nineteen centuries! And in the midst of the stirring scenes of these recent years, how often verily has Jesus of Nazareth been rejected and hurled out of the midst of brethren who profess to understand the Plan of God and who claim to be the very chosen instruments for the promulgation of the Truth. Verily history is repeated in our day!

Again, my friends, we are bringing this lesson still more closely home to ourselves and asking what we would do about it, if Jesus should walk into this room tonight and not be known as the Son of God to us; and suppose He should open His mouth and lay bare the Truth before us on many points; and in the course of His sayings, imagine His exposing and showing up the falsity of some of the pet theories, traditions and notions that we have entertained and cherished, and suppose He should plainly rebuke some things about our conduct and our customs; the great question is, Would His message to us be acceptable and would we act upon His

advice? In other words, have we that measure of the Spirit of God, that holy discernment, have we sufficient of meekness, humility, teachableness and of the love of God, to permit Jesus Christ to look into our hearts and tell us all that is not right and pleasing in His sight, and then to bow in grateful humility and submission to His holy will? I will leave these suggestions and questions for each and all in this auditorium this evening to think over and answer as each thinks best.

But have we ever stopped to really think seriously just how the Savior would view matters and what He would say to us were He to visibly appear in our midst in these times? Some have said, O how I wish the Master would visit with us as He did with those disciples long ago; how I wish I might consult Him with regard to many questions that have so troubled me; I am sure if the Master were right in our midst we could soon have these various vexing problems and issues that have so disturbed Bible Students in these recent years, quickly settled. But brethren, is there really any question; problem, or difficulty before us today that the Master has not already answered in one or another of His many sayings, when He was here long ago? And has He not through the Spirit in the apostolic messages dealt with all the present issues and perplexities that have arisen amongst Bible Students?

But still some one says, If He were here I would like to ask Him who has charge of His Church today and who He has put over His people to control and direct them with power and authority. How would Jesus make reply to this question? I believe, my friends, that we already have His answer, and His reply now would be exactly the same as the truth He expounded when He was here. He would surely say in answer to that question, My dear disciples, I have never vacated the position that the Father gave to Me in the beginning of the Age. As I then said, One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren, so now I say that I alone have charge of My Church and I have never delegated authority to any man or company of men to rule over the Church or interfere with the individual liberty of each member. Was not that the way that Jesus presented the situation to us with regard to the order of the Church when it was instituted nineteen centuries ago?

Still another would like to ask the question today, Master, tell us what great movement or work have you authorized your people to carry on in the earth today; what great pronouncement is there to be made in fulfillment of your will? Again, we may be sure the Lord would answer in harmony with what He established as the mission of the Church when it was instituted, and His answer would be, I have not authorized any great movement or any great work to be achieved during this dispensation, for My Kingdom is not of this world. I remind you that in the beginning of the Age I said that My people would be a few and a little flock, that they would be scattered here and there throughout the earth; and I never authorized My disciples to organize any great and wonderful work while yet in their earthly pilgrimage. Was not this the sum of the teachings of Christ and the Apostles with regard to what was authorized and expected of the faithful Church all along through the centuries until her glorification?

There is still another question that some would like to ask: they would say to the Master, Lord, will you not tell us just who and where your people are to be found in the earth today, we desire to know just who are your true disciples, that we may be numbered with them and thus enjoy the fellowship of the true saints. Again we believe the Lord would answer and say, **“My followers are those who do the will of**

**My Father in heaven, they are those who possess My Spirit; they are such as are consecrated and surrendered to My will; they are those who deny themselves and have taken up their cross to follow Me; in fact, whoever will do the will of My Father, the same is My brother, My sister and My mother.**” And dear brethren would not this reply of the Master be satisfactory to us? Do we not really love all who love the Lord Jesus Christ and possess His Spirit? Do we not agree with St. Paul that as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God? And do we not also agree with the same Apostle when he says that if any man have not the Spirit of Christ He is none of His? All of our problems and perplexities today, friends, can be settled if we properly take them to the Lord and inquire what the Spirit has long ago said unto the Church.

We all realize that in these recent years God’s people have merged into a period of trial and testing, of great severity, and we often have occasion to ask, “Who shall be able to stand?” Some have inquired whence came these severe tests and what is the seat of this distressing situation that has come about since the departure of our beloved Brother Russell. My friends, these crucial tests and unhappy conditions have not happened overnight. Like the growth of a tree, in which time and various processes of nature have had to perform their part, so in the development of the distressing circumstances in which we find ourselves now, a considerable number of years have been required. Let us not be afraid, friends, to look the facts squarely in the face. The sum of the matter [is] that within six months following the death of Brother Russell, the foundation of all these evils was laid. Every principle of honor, of justice, of truth and righteousness was thrown down and trampled underfoot, and in their place there was established a complete state of apostasy. We have all had our lesson to learn, my friends, in connection with what has transpired in the past thirteen years. And now I wonder if I can plainly say what is in my mind without being misunderstood by any of you. I am going to believe that I can frankly express these thoughts without their being misconstrued. What that situation developed in 1917, and the works of unrighteousness gained a firm foothold, I was one who refused to believe that the great body of Truth people throughout the world would stand by and permit it to prosper the way it has; I could not think that the friends throughout the country, accustomed as they were under Brother Russell’s ministry, to reason on principles of justice, truth, and honesty, would allow this overwhelming apostasy to replace the holy things that we had been accustomed to, while Brother Russell was with us.

But alas, I too have had some important lessons to learn, lessons of patience, forbearance and of resignation to the will of God. It was not God’s time then for all the brethren to be made aware of what was happening; it was not the proper season for them to discern the mischief that was accomplishing its evil work. Truly my heart rejoices tonight as I realize through these years the Lord has been working with His people in various parts of the earth, permitting these distressing circumstances to work as tests and to manifest who are truly His. And in connection with these tests how much we all have felt the need of going back and reviewing the great lessons given us in the Bible, such as that of the forgiving love of Joseph for his brethren; of the forbearance exercised by David toward Saul; of the loyalty of Daniel in the midst of his persecutions; and last, and of greatest importance, the wonderful example of patience and love left us by Jesus Christ who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself and who, when He was reviled, reviled not again.

In modern times the Church of Christ has had the **example of a great man of God**; we are all confident that he faithfully performed the duties of a true minister. And some one was recently asking me how we could best show our gratitude toward and our appreciation of the inspiring life-work of Brother Russell. I replied: Brother, I can do no better than answer this question according to the suggestion of St. Paul. We recall how he admonished the brethren at his time that they should esteem very highly for their work's sake, those who had labored in the Lord on their behalf and had rendered loving and faithful service. Surely this is the way we should regard our beloved Brother who has so faithfully served the Church. In fact, the best way and method for us to prove the sincerity and depth of our appreciation of Brother Russell is to live the kind of a life and to practice the things that he recommended as being proof of a genuine Christian. By giving heed to Brother Russell's advice and by working out in our lives those principles of truth and righteousness that he advocated, we will most surely be honoring Brother Russell.

I care not, my friends, how much a man may go up and down the country endeavoring to point out Brother Russell here and there in the Bible; if that man in his example and conduct is showing an intolerant, narrow and unchristlike spirit, if he is neglecting to show the love of Christ, then all of his high-sounding praises of Brother Russell and his attempts to point him out in the Bible count for nothing. They go no way toward really honoring the memory of our beloved brother.

Please do not misunderstand me, brethren: I do not take second place to any one when it comes to regarding and esteeming Brother Russell highly. I had the great honor of living with Brother Russell the last ten years of his life; I saw him coming and going daily; I had the privilege for a number of years of meeting with him as a member of the Board of Directors; I have been with him in private conferences; and I am fully confident, my friends, of what the real spirit and attitude of Brother Russell really was. He did not desire any one to give him any measure or degree of honor that belonged to the Lord.

Some years before his death he noted the tendency on the part of many to exercise themselves in a sort of man-worshiping spirit, and a disposition to see himself rather than the Lord. Our beloved Brother undertook to correct this wrongful attitude and he cited the example of the messenger who had given the revelation to St. John. You will recall that near the conclusion of the visions the Apostle seemed to feel that the angel was the Lord Himself, and was so filled with the spirit of reverence that he tells us that he fell at the feet of the angel who showed him these things; and in response the heavenly messenger forbade the Apostle doing this. He refused to accept the homage, saying, I am merely a fellow-servant of thine; I am not your Lord; I am only a fellow-servant of all those who have gone before and have announced the Divine Message: **worship God!** And so our beloved Brother Russell ever sought to discourage the spirit of man-worship, saying to the friends that he regarded himself merely as an index finger, in the Lord's providence, endeavoring to point the people of God to the right paths and to the great truths that have to do with giving them a proper conception of their Christian duty.

Some one recently said to me, Who do you think is taking Brother Russell's place in the Church since his departure? My reply was, no one is filling Brother Russell's place: Brother Russell has no successor, nor does the Church need any one to succeed him. Therefore we have no reason to expect that any one man or company of men

should take the place of Brother Russell. But still there came another question: Who is finishing Brother Russell's work? My reply was that Brother Russell left none of **his** unfinished, and therefore does not need any one to finish any work for **him**. I feel sure, friends, that none of us would like to settle down to the conclusion that our Brother left these earthly scenes without completing his life mission and work. I am confident that our dear Brother completed his work just as certainly as those other great servants of the Church throughout the Age finished their work before ceasing their earthly life. But the questioner insisted, Did not Brother Russell leave some work to be completed in the Church? Most surely, we replied, but whatever work was left was not **his** work, for he surely completed all that God gave him to do. You and I, friends, still abiding here in the house of our pilgrimage, have our own work to complete before our earthly labors are ended; and we are remembering that our mission is the same as that assigned the Church all along in the past, namely making herself ready to be the Bride and Joint-heir with Christ. And there is no authority over us other than that of Christ and the Holy Spirit; we are individually admonished to make our calling and election sure. We are trying to help and comfort one another in every possible way, are we not? We are endeavoring to minister to one another's spiritual needs. In the fulfillment of this our sacred mission, we all realize the need to daily hear what the Spirit is saying to us, that our lives may be conformed to the heavenly counsel.

Deeply conscious of our need to be filled with the Spirit from above, we may properly ask, What is the Lord's method of increasing our supply of this holy power? We may be sure that it is not within the power of man or a company of men to impart this blessing; neither can the Church itself convey this power to others. If we call a business meeting of the Church and pass a resolution to the effect that all shall possess more abundantly of the Spirit, will such proceedings really bring us into possession of more of that power? The answer must be in the negative, for that is not the Lord's way for imparting His Spirit to any one. That was not the method of giving the Holy Spirit to the Church in the beginning of the Age; nor can you or I or any member of the Church today legislate the Holy Spirit or the love of Christ into the Church or into one individual. That choicest of all gifts and blessing **must come** in the divinely appointed way; by first of all our presenting to God a surrendered heart, and waiting before Him in the spirit of resignation, supplication, and prayer. Let us not forget what has been written of those who waited before the Lord just prior to the Day of Pentecost. We read concerning those waiting disciples that, "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication." Again we must maintain that it is a matter of individual preparation for the gift of the Holy Spirit; it is a matter between the individual believer and the Lord Himself. Such is the responsibility placed upon each one of us who have been called to walk in the footsteps of Christ and to hear what the Spirit saith unto the church, in order that we may be directed and built up in Christ and at last receive a place amongst all them that are sanctified.

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The second day of the Convention was then brought to a close by singing of Hymn 267.

Although the sessions of the Convention for the day were officially over, the friends had little desire to depart, but remained for quite a time visiting and in fellowship with one another, but finally departed to their several resting places.