

FOOD AND ASSOCIATION

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NOTES OF AN ADDRESS BY F. L.
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References: Genesis I: 26 "And God said, let us make man in our image after our likeness."

Exodus XVI: 9-15 and 31-36.

Numbers XI: 4-9.

Mark VI: 30-32.

It is nothing in the nature of a set discourse that I have before me tonight, it is rather in the nature of an informal talk, especially desiring to emphasize two thoughts. The one thought is food, or assimilation, and the other is association—what we eat, and with whom or with what we associate. In seeking to emphasize those two thoughts I have gone back to what I read in the first of Genesis, because it supplies us with what we might call an original thought with God,

and when God has an original thought He never changes it. Whatever may come in, though things may appear to be in abeyance for a time, God always reverts to His thought and God always reaches His end.

Now it is very simple to say that but when we get hold of it it helps us a great deal, because as Christians, as children of God, we would like to be on the line on which God is working instead of, possibly through ignorance or self-will, thwarting the line along which God is working.

The original thought with God when man was introduced was: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." There are two thoughts in that. Image is one and likeness is the other. I think we can very well understand that when it comes to a question of a created being it should have a mind which would move in intellectual ways, and a moral being. I think we can equally well understand that it would be an original thought with God that such a being should be in nothing out of harmony with Himself. We can see at once that if God is to permit a created intelligence into His universe that

to administer for Him. The thought of man introduced is thus as the image of God. It is a remarkable expression. Man in his debasement and degradation has drifted so far from God that we lose the very idea of the grandeur and dignity of what was the mind of God at the outset; but we should not minimize it.

It is remarkable that the same term is used with regard to the introduction of Adam as is used concerning Christ in glory — “image.” “If our gospel be hid it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded their eyes, lest the light of the glorious gospel of the Christ, who is the *image* of God, should shine unto them.”

“Let us make man in our image,”—thus it is an original thought with God, that in the created sphere where things were each in the appointed order perfect, there should be put one deriving from God the breath of life, becoming a living soul, given intellectual power and a moral being, and that such an one should be representative for God. That was Adam’s position.

created intelligence must take character from Himself. It would never be in the mind of God that there should be let loose into His creation an intelligence and a moral being, a capacity for intellectual power, that should work at cross purposes to the divine mind. Therefore, with the introduction of man it is: "Let us make man in our image after our likeness". Don't you think that is very important? Well now, where has man got to? How far has that been preserved? It is very evident that man has abandoned any idea but that of using intellectual power for self-aggrandizement, and his moral being for self-elevation as against God.

Now the christian wants to be on guard against that, you do not want to be caught in the spirit and atmosphere of this present evil world. And what is there conveyed in those two thoughts — image and likeness? The first thought as to image I take to be representation—that is, to represent God in an ordered scene which He has laid out on His own lines and has completed. Into that scene, and to control that, He puts a creature with intellectual powers and a moral being,

And then the other thought is likeness. I take that to be a question of characteristics. That is, that created being was to take character from God, not only to represent God. Do you see what is meant? The king of Great Britain, for instance, can send an envoy to India or to Ireland to represent him, to rule or govern, yet the envoy may be dissimilar in character. But the thought in the first of Genesis is that the one who was to be the representative, there for administration, was also to be in the *character* of God; and there is brought in the thought of beneficence, goodness, mercy, and, in it's proper time and order, righteousness and the like; that the man who was to be here representative for God should be in character like God, so that there might be an impress upon the created sphere of goodness, of mercy, of peace, of beneficence, where everything should send up from the earth gratitude and response to the goodness of God.

I think we can see that in this there is something uncommonly beautiful and uncommonly worth while. But look abroad and what do you see? By looking abroad,

I mean, see what man has become. If you look into the faces of men in the present day do you see the suggestion of God there? What do you see as you pass them in the crowd,—faces hard, wrinkled, selfish, cruel, debased, eager, aggressive, arrogant, proud, or, it may be, down in the vice of the gutter. I say, who would dare link such thoughts with the image of God? In the world, as it has become, do you see the character of God set forth in man, His goodness, His mercy, His beneficence, His love of righteousness, His hatred of iniquity? Are these things in evidence? You know they are not, and we know that the world is groaning and agonizing, the world is in pain and anguish now because it has abandoned God and has thus ceased to be representative of God or in the character of God.

Now I just call attention to that as the original thought because when we come in on the ground of redemption, when there is the presentation of Christ, it at once becomes evident that recovery is insured, that the way is made clear and that God will bring about His original intent. Therefore the

enormous gain of being, not only in Christ for the hope of glory, for a place in heaven, but left here for a bit in this scene, that, through the infinite privilege which comes in through Christ Jesus, the Holy Spirit may touch us for some purpose, that individually, and it may be in association, there may be some answer to the image and likeness of God. That is, I think, what is presented to us in the gospel in the recovery that there is in Christ Jesus.

Hinging upon that come the two important points of food and association. I think one might make bold to say that these two things pretty nearly cover the ground — that the original thought of God is worked out in a practical way, experimentally, in image and character, along the lines of food and association, of course always in connection with the formative work of the Holy Spirit.

It is with that in view that I have touched on what we get in Exodus—the manna. It was a deeply interesting and important moment. Up to this moment everything in the ways of God with His people was on the ground of grace. The covenant and the law

had not yet come in. Therefore, when they murmur God treats with them, as it were, on the score of their ignorance and lack of knowledge of Himself. They have not learned Him, and God is infinitely patient. But they had raised the question of how they were to live, how they were to be fed, they who had had their habits of life in Egypt, which had all been summarily terminated. They had been put as a new people on new ground — really on resurrection ground — and it was a very serious issue that was raised with them. — How are we going to exist? Their murmurings are heard and God comes in. He exercises His sovereign prerogative of mercy rather than of judgment, and in the introduction of what is about to come amongst them as associated with the glory of the Lord, the people are gathered to see the glory of Jehovah in the cloud. Now that is important, because what was to follow the exhibition of the glory of Jehovah was something on the ground small as coriander seed. The glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud in the face of all that assembled host, so that they might be suitably impressed with the importance, the dignity, of the

something which would lie upon the ground, small, and in appearance like coriander seed.

It is very evident that the divine mind and the human mind are widely apart. We know perfectly well that when it is a question of any human glory, any pageant which introduces the glory of man, the thing introduced is something that man calls big, something that is impressive. Jehovah appears in the cloud, but He was going to put upon the ground something small, which was the food from heaven. What was it? Bread from heaven! It was Christ, the lowly Man humbled here upon earth. Therefore the people are sanctified, they are given peace, they are made to assemble in all the solemnity of the moment, and their eyes are focused on the glory of the cloud that appears there in the wilderness, and then they are sent away until the morrow. And on the morrow, when they get up early in the morning, it has come to pass that the dew (which scripturally is always seen as falling from heaven) is there upon the ground, and upon it lies in abundance that which was small as coriander seed, expressive of Christ delivered

out from the bosom of the Father, to come here upon earth to the lowliness of the cottage in Bethlehem, that He might be here food for God and food for man.

The glory of God introduces Christ in that way, just as when the manger was ready in the stable in Bethlehem the glory of God filled the heavens, the myriads of the heavenly hosts were there, and all who were interested were challenged to hear the voice from heaven itself calling attention to that which was exceedingly small but exceedingly precious in the sight of heaven and in the heart of God—Jesus as the Babe lying in the manger!

And so at the end of the chapter in Exodus it was ordained that some of the manna was to be taken! A golden pot was provided for it expressing that what was there given as food was not only food for man but was divine bread, and it was to be laid up within the ark of the testimony, so that throughout their generations there should always be that under the eye of Jehovah upon which the heart's affections of the people should be resting, even when in the land, "of Christ

once humbled here". So there is a blessed turn given to that in the second of Revelation in the word to the overcomer where it is promised that he shall eat of the "hidden manna", that is, Christ as He is in heaven. And one makes bold to say throughout all eternity He is perpetuated in the sight of God and in the affections of His people as the One who was once the lowly Man here upon earth; what He was in that character is never lost.

Well, then I refer to the eleventh of Numbers as expressive of what has come to pass. We have to take account of an abnormal condition of things.

We are in what is called Christendom. It is a terrible place we are in, but we cannot help ourselves. We do not like it. We were born into it. We were born into the environment of it, and what has come to pass in it? "Our souls loath this light bread." It is the voice of Christendom. Who has patience with the lowly man, Christ Jesus? Who is there that will take Him according to God's valuation of Him? It is exceedingly touching the way in which the Spirit of God turns

here, in the face of what the people say, - "Our soul is dried away, there is nothing at all besides this manna before our eyes"- and says (verse seven), "The manna was as coriander seed, and the color thereof as the color of bdellium". It is a parenthesis of the Spirit of God to challenge our hearts that Jesus, the lowly Man on earth, was very beautiful. If He were lowly, yet is His color like that of a precious pearl. As I understand the color to be, it is like that of the translucence of the pearl. The Spirit of God stops to emphasize that fact when they were saying, "Our souls loath this light bread", "Our soul is dried away, there is nothing at all besides this manna before our eyes". Well, what has God got before His eyes but Christ? What do you want before your eyes but Christ? But the fact of the matter is, if I have man according to the flesh before my eyes there is an unconscious depreciation of Christ in my soul. We have to take account of that. It is your danger, it is my danger. There is a depreciation of Christ in our souls when there is an excessive occupation with man according to the flesh. Man is determined to spread before

our eyes in every way his big works, his big factories, his big achievements. Oh, the swaggering pride of man in the affairs of this world! The note that rings through all is the greatness of this nation or that people, of the awful deeds that are done in the way of destruction and the like, and we come under a very subtle and terrible influence at the present time.

In the face of this the Spirit of God stops and calls attention. Is it small? Is it lowly? But it is the color of bdellium! There is a sweet and holy beauty about the Man, Christ Jesus, as under the eye of God here in this world, the like of which nothing else can match. He calls attention to that. But what do the people do? They went about and gathered it, ground it in mills, beat it in a mortar, baked it in pans, made cakes of it, anything and everything to try and make the name of Christ, the profession of Christ, palatable. We know how it is—different kinds of entertainments, different kinds of shows, music, pictures, and the association of all kinds of names, all kinds of propositions. Mix up something or other to make

Christ tolerable. Do something that will make it interesting—bake it in a pan in the oven, beat it in the mortar, make it into cakes! But Christ, simple, pure, the lowly Man, the One who says, “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, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls”, - what are you going to do with that One? Are you going to mix Him in with the fearful abominations done in Christendom under the name of Christianity and the name of Christ? Are you going to, as it were, beat Him in the mortar to make a cake? Are you going to do something to make Him “who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens” palatable? Think of it, that He has trodden the earth where you and I are, under the eye of God; Bread from heaven, and you are going to do this? It is what Christendom is doing. Well, I say, thank God if my eyes have been opened and I have been delivered from such a snare as that. And the color? The color is heavenly, the color is pure. I thank God that He has brought.

to my soul the Man, Christ Jesus.

And then the Spirit of God comments in this way, - "When the dew fell upon the camp in the night the manna fell upon it." Now that is very beautiful, isn't it? Do you catch the idea? "When the dew fell upon the camp in the night." There is the camp, the people asleep in their tents, and there is the care of God. He is feeding them with Christ. He introduces that food by the way of glory. He is feeding them with Christ; there upon the wilderness comes the dew, and I take that to mean that if Christ is to be appropriated and assimilated, we can only do so as we receive Him resting upon the Holy Spirit in our souls. We cannot appreciate Christ apart from that. The natural man cannot appreciate Christ. The natural man will seek to appropriate Christ in other connections, as I said, in music, in pictures, in doings of one kind and another, but for the one who really loves Him there is only one way of appropriating Him and that is what He is in His blessed Person as a place of rest and that produced by the presence of the Holy Spirit. You cannot feed upon Him apart from the Holy Spirit. And so

there in the wilderness lie the drops of dew and upon those drops of dew rests the manna; so when they come out of their tents in the morning that which greets them, resting upon the glittering dew, is what in appearance was as the coriander seed, small, and beautiful as a pearl, and this was their food. See what it shows, how the human heart could take that and beat it in a mortar! Now that is what Christendom is doing, but we have deliverance from the evil of it.

Well now, I pass on to what we get in the sixth of Mark, which was really the thought in my mind in reading these scriptures. The Lord Jesus had gathered to Himself a little company, and He sent them out, fitted with power which He Himself brought into the scene for blessing. They had gone out, and now we read in the thirtieth verse that the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, to tell Him all things both what they had done and what they had taught. There we see that they had an appreciation of Christ. They did the right thing in the right way. They had gone out from Him and they had, as it were, carried out their

baskets from Him; they had dispensed abroad, the poor should be fed, and when they had done that they turned and came back to the One who had sent them out to tell Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught, and the Lord takes them in hand. He says, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest awhile: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat". The Lord understands that.

I confess that sometimes, as things are organized in this present world, one gets a feeling almost of despair. You get pressed out of measure. We all of us appreciate how this world is organized. It is never intended that the people of God shall have a little leisure if it can be helped. I haven't a shadow of doubt that there is a deliberation on the part of the god of this world that things shall be so organized that we shall have as little leisure as possible. Now think it over. What time do you get to be with the Lord? What time to be with the Lord or His people? You know, (one has often said it and no doubt I have spoken of it be-

fore here) the only time we really *live* is the time that we have free from necessary uses. We must sleep and that takes so many hours. Then we must eat, and that takes so much time. We must do our business and that takes so many hours. What have you left? You sit down and figure it over sometime. When you come to think of it, it is in that time, and that time alone, we really live.

You are only existing when sleeping, or "as hireling" filling your day. Eating is simply a necessary use, you do not live to eat. Therefore, the only time in which we live is the free time that is left over of those things. Now what do you get out of it? Is it not sized up for us here, when the Lord says, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest awhile: for there were many coming and going and they had no leisure so much as to eat"?

Now if we are really set on it the Lord will help us. The world won't help you, and unless we are a bit violent about it we shall not make anything out of it. We have to be violent. The kingdom of God suffers vio-

lence, the violent take it by force. Something must be sacrificed. What is it going to be? Are you going to sacrifice your comfort, going to sacrifice your prosperity in this world? Are we going to sacrifice our material gain? We have to sacrifice something if we are to be feeding upon the manna, if we are to be in the company of Christ. Now what shall it be? The Lord, I am sure, will help us if we are bent upon it. It is His thought, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest awhile." "They departed privately," we read. Again and again the Lord took the disciples privately: He took them into the upper chamber. He was constantly suggesting to them that He would make Himself available for them to appropriate, and if we are bent upon it I am sure the Lord will help us. How can we get along unless we find somewhere the time that we can just go away into a corner, shutting out everybody and everything - our business, our wives, our husbands, or our children, and just sit down, as David did, before the Lord? We have to do it, my friends, we have to do it.

And then too there is the other side. We do it individually, but we have also to come to it when with our brethren. "Come ye yourselves". We want our brethren.

The point I want to urge is that virtually everything in creation takes character from what it feeds upon. That is a well known truth. People know perfectly well that according as they feed their cattle they take character. They feed them for plumpness or for leanness, fibre, or muscle, and the like, but according as they feed them the cattle take character. Thence the importance of what I am trying to urge. When the divine mind contemplates a people here upon earth amongst whom He would dwell and have His pleasure, He reverts to His original idea of image and likeness, and gives them food that would bring them into suitability. That is the idea in the manna. The idea of the manna is that God sets out an expression of Christ, which, if we appropriate and feed upon it, will produce likeness to Christ, similarity to Christ, and in that measure there is what God takes pleasure in.

Now it is an old thought, a scriptural

thought, that the manna was to be gathered early. Why lay stress upon that? I do not mind saying that for myself I feel in a way the day is apt to be lost unless one can have a little quiet time to take manna. Never mind what other kind of food we get during the day, we need the manna. I believe the soul needs it as a steady foundation that we start the day with manna, before other impressions come upon us to disturb and distract. Now manna, as I understand it, is the Man who came from heaven, who was in the power of the Holy Spirit, and who went about doing good; whose character was one of meekness and lowliness; who was known as the peacemaker and as poor in spirit; the unfailing in service; the one who in short showed the character of God. In other words, it is Christ as we have Him presented to us in the gospels. So, personally, I feel that the day has not started aright, that there is something lacking, unless I can sit down to have a little meditation upon what is furnished in the gospels and nowhere else. It is there that we find the manna, where we get an impression of Christ personally, how He viewed things, how He did

things, how He met the various things that came upon Him; and thus we absorb and assimilate the character of Christ. The man who expresses strong opinions about things gives me no impression of Christ. A man arrogant, proud, self-centered, a man seeking material gain and all those things, gives me no impressions of Christ, I get the impressions of Christ by feeding upon manna, upon Him as He was here upon earth, in the circumstance through which I am passing. Therefore, I urge that if we are to revert to the original thought of God, and God is to receive from His people that which is an answer to His character and Himself, it can only be through the food which we feed upon. I do not touch upon the other foods, the old corn of the land, or the pass-over, the meal offering, the cakes of shew bread, the peace offering, and the like, but just keep to the one point, that which was presented here upon earth as Man in whole suitability to God, and that was Christ in His thirty three years of life down here.

Speak of anger, for instance, or indignation. So far as I recall, it is only recorded three times in the scripture in connection

with Christ. Once, that He looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, that they should question His healing a poor, suffering man. Don't you catch a thought from that? How do you view man? How do you look upon the present conditions? What is there to make the goodness of God known unless it flows from those taught in mind and heart by the Spirit of Christ? Then you remember that when they brought the little ones to Christ the disciples rebuked the parents and would have them sent away, and the Lord had indignation (the word used in the new translation is "indignation") that they should do such a thing; that they so little understood His character and how He would receive those infants and put His hand of blessing upon them. The indignation was that His character should be so misunderstood in respect of them. And so with regard to the scribes and Pharisees who shut up the way of heaven against people, the Lord was indignant at them. In every relation, if you turn to the gospels, you will see how Christ thought, you will see how He

spoke, how He did things, the angle from which He viewed things, and as you come under the influence of that you are feeding, and feeding, you assimilate - you take character from Him.

And then as to association, I suppose it goes along with it. "Evil associations", you know, "corrupt good manners." What are your associations? Who are your companions? I have raised the question, what do you feed upon - newspapers, light literature, religious matter brayed in the mortar, beaten up and made into cakes, pretty little fictions that have a religious turn, a religious moral to them, and the like? Nauseating! You raise the question of what we feed upon, there is also the question, what is your companionship: those into whose company you like to get? Whom do you share things with? Who are your confidants? When you have that free moment that you are not giving over to feeding, as we have been saying, whom do you go with? Who is living next door? Who is in your own house? Whom in the office or workshop do you pick out?

Now if you will turn to the original

thought of God, that what has been shining under His eye in the person of Christ should be perpetuated in His people, you will find it resolves itself into the two matters - food and association. The Lord is not indifferent, not unsympathetic, not ignorant. He knows our circumstances, knows the hardness of the way we have to travel, knows the opposition and difficulty, and He says, Come ye yourselves apart and rest awhile; for there are many coming and going and they had no leisure so much as to eat. We know that is true, and dear friends, we have to face it, have to prepare accordingly, and we have by violence to overcome that condition. We have to reform our associations, have to weigh in the balance, — the balance of the sanctuary — our diet, so that we shall take only a safe, pure, wholesome diet, which heaven itself says is sufficient for the nourishment of your soul, and that is the Bread that came down from heaven in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.