

WHAT ARE WE?

by Watchman Nee

Our God is a purposeful God, full of desire and intention. His eternal plan to gain an enlarged corporate expression of Himself in Christ cannot be deterred by the corruption of His original creation by His enemy, Satan, and it cannot be deterred by the degradation that is present within His new creation, the church. To redeem His chosen elect and to gain an overcoming testimony in the church, God carries out His purpose in His economy according to the principle of recovery. God's creation was damaged by the injection of the sinful nature of Satan through man's rebellion. In order to recover His chosen elect, God operated according to the economy of His triune being, coming as the Son with the Father by the Spirit. Through incarnation, human living, death, resurrection, and descension, the Son, as the embodiment of the fullness of God, accomplished redemption (Eph. 1:7), and the divine life was imparted into His chosen believers (1 Pet. 1:3). In His economy the Triune God has fully recovered His chosen believers back to their rightful position in His plan.

The consummation of God's plan, however, has been frustrated by the degradation of the church, which began shortly after its creation on the day of Pentecost. From the deceit of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11), the discord in the church in Jerusalem (6:1), the forsaking of the apostle and his ministry (2 Tim. 1:15-18), and the pervasive division of the Body of Christ throughout church history, the testimony of the church has been progressively damaged. As a consequence, the apostles' teaching has been greatly leavened to the point that darkness is considered as light (Matt. 6:23). In order to recover the testimony of the church, Christ's Body, God continues to operate according to the economy of His own being to head up His believers in Christ. This heading up is dependent upon two factors: truth and life, both of which are intrinsically related to God in His triune being. Both truth and life are hypostatic. The Triune God is truth, and the Triune God is life, and as divine truth is unveiled, divine life is applied. This application has both a historical development and a current manifestation.

In this article, Watchman Nee traces the recovery of truth in church history. As an impromptu message given to fellow-workers in 1934, Nee's summary demonstrates both an appreciation for the truths that were recovered by his predecessors and a willingness to seek out and to uncompromisingly guard the truths that the

Lord had unveiled in the early part of the twentieth century. In the second article, *Witness Lee*, Watchman Nee's co-worker, summarizes the development of these truths today. In this article numerous references are provided to previous articles that have appeared in *Affirmation & Critique* which confirm and develop these items of truth. Apart from furthering the Lord's economy of life and truth for the purpose of recovery, there is no reason for *Affirmation & Critique*. The subsequent two articles, therefore, seek to develop the principle of recovery as it applies to the recovery of the high truth of the gospel and of image and dominion. May the recovery of truth unto life be intensified more and more through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is sufficient to overcome all vestiges of spiritual death and division in the Body of Christ.

Today we will look at one question: what are we? What are we doing here? In the past we have not said much about this matter because it is somewhat awkward to do so. For this reason we have been reluctant to speak about ourselves. However, though we have not mentioned the matter, others have often asked us, "What are you?" Some have even said that we are the Revival Church, or the Little Flock Church, or The Christian [Editor's note: Watchman Nee published a magazine, *The Christian*] Church. Hence, we would like to say a few words concerning this question.

First, we must clarify that we are not some thing. We are not a new denomination. Neither are we a new sect, a new movement, or a new organization. We are not here to join a certain sect or form our own sect. Other than having a special calling and commission from God, there would be no need for us to exist independently. The reason we are here is that God has given us a special calling.

Established in the Present Truth

Second Peter 1:12 mentions the words "established in the present truth." The "present truth" can also be rendered the "up-to-date truth." What is the up-to-date truth? Actually, all the truths are in the Bible; there is not one truth that is not in the Bible. Although they are all in the Bible, through man's foolishness, unfaithfulness, negligence, and

disobedience many of the truths were lost and hidden from man. The truths were there, but man did not see them or touch them. Not until the fullness of time did God release certain truths during particular periods of time and cause them to be revealed once more.

These freshly revealed truths are not God's new inventions. Rather, they are man's new discoveries. There is no need for invention, but there is the need for discovery. In past generations God revealed different truths. During certain periods of time, He caused men to discover these specific truths. We can see this clearly from the history of the church.

Take, for example, the raising up of Martin Luther in the sixteenth century. God opened his eyes to see the matter of justification by faith. He was a vessel raised up by God to unveil the truth of justification by faith. This does not mean that before Luther there was no such thing as justification by faith. The fact already existed before Luther's time. Luther was merely the one who realized this truth in a stronger way; he was particularly outstanding in this truth. For this reason, this truth became the "present truth" in that age.

Every worker of the Lord should inquire before God as to what the present truth is. We need to ask: "God, what is the present truth?" Although there are many major and crucial truths in the Bible, what we need to know is God's present truth. Not only do we need to know the general truths, we must also be clear about God's present truth.

Truth Recovered during the Sixteenth Century

From the sixteenth century on, God has been recovering different truths. The sixteenth century was the age of the Reformation. It was a time of monumental change in religion. This does not mean that before the sixteenth century there was no recovery. There were recoveries before that time. However, it was from the sixteenth century on that there were significant recoveries. We have to consider the history from the time of the Reformation as belonging to four periods. The first period is the period of the Reformation. The second period is the time immediately after the Reformation, from the sixteenth century to the eighteenth century. The third period is the nineteenth century, and the last period is the present twentieth century.

First, let us consider Luther's Reformation. When Luther was raised up by God, he saw the light and proposed that man go back to the truth in the book of Romans. Today many people evaluate Luther's work from the political angle and consider it to be a political movement. However, having read Luther's diaries, writings, and books, I see that his motives and goals were right. The best thing about him was his recovery of the truth of justification by faith. This

is Luther's particular recovery. Of course, God did not recover all the truths through Luther. Luther recovered only the truth concerning justification by faith. He did not make complete changes with regard to the church. For example, he still recognized the state church and approved of the church being part of the state. He did not receive light regarding this point. For this reason, not long after, the Lutheran denomination became the state religion of Germany. Luther himself once said that the church should not be controlled by the state. Yet he considered administrative questions transitional, temporal, and of the outer court, and not matters that belong to the Holy Place. Therefore, he was not thorough in this matter. God allowed the question of church administration to be left unsolved at Luther's time. Although this matter was not successfully recovered, the truth of justification by faith was definitely recovered. God dug up this buried truth from all the traditions, human opinions, and creeds and caused this truth to be known and preached once more. If a person were born in that age, what he should have done was preach this truth and exhort others concerning this truth. If he did not do this, he should not be considered a faithful worker of God in that age.

The Recovery of Truth from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century

Following this we come to the period from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. In 1524 the Anabaptists, a group of believers who proposed re-baptism after infant-sprinkling, were raised up in Germany. They were followers of the earlier brothers from Lhota who preached the baptism of believers. Before this time the Roman Catholic Church as well as the Lutheran Church sprinkled infants. These Anabaptists not only preached the truth of justification by faith, but they went on further to baptize the believers who were justified by faith. After the Anglican Church was established in England, these people told others that the church should not have anything to do with politics. For this reason they were persecuted and exiled.

After twelve years, in 1536 John Calvin was raised up by God. He was one of the greatest vessels of God in that age. After he was raised up, he faced persecution everywhere, first in Switzerland and then in Germany. Wherever he went, he was met with persecution and exile. Finally, in Scotland he had a fresh beginning and established the Scottish Presbyterian Church.

The period between the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century was the time the Anglican Church was formed in England. This was the beginning of the state church in England. Although it freed itself from the influence of the Roman Catholic Church, it found itself linked with British politics. For

this reason, various dissenters rose up in England. They opposed the state religion and held opinions different from those of the state religion. They said that the church should not be under the state's control and that church and state should have a clear separation. Although these dissenters were bold to point out the mistakes of the state church, they themselves did not return fully to the teaching of the New Testament. These are the things that happened in England.

At this time in Germany, God raised up Philipp Jakob Spener. He became a pastor in a Lutheran Church in Frankfurt in 1670. By that time the Lutheran denomination had fallen into a kind of formal religion. By reading his Bible, Spener found out that the church at his time was full of human opinions, something forbidden by God. He saw that the believers should return to the teaching of the New Testament. For this reason he began to lead others into the practice of 1 Corinthians 14. In his meetings he began to teach others to reject the traditional formalities and to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, his practice did not last long.

By 1732 the earliest missionary body in the world was conceived, the so-called Moravian Brethren. The word *Moravian* originates from a place called Moravia. They were the first group of brothers to go throughout the entire world to evangelize. Eighty-five out of one hundred among them eventually became foreign missionaries. Their beginning can be traced to a brother called Christian David. He was regenerated at the age of twenty-two. Before he was saved, he had traveled everywhere in search of the truth concerning salvation but to no avail. One day he found the way to salvation. After he was saved, he returned to his hometown in Moravia and began to boldly proclaim this truth. God did a great work through him. Through this revival, persecution came, and he was chased out of his homeland to Saxony. There he met Count Zinzendorf. The latter was only twenty-two years of age at that time and was a member of the aristocracy in a small kingdom. Due to the persecution in Moravia, the brothers fled from their land and were received by Brother Zinzendorf in his territory. There they began the Moravian Church. Dwelling among the little hills of Saxony, they began to build up a homeland. Gradually different kinds of Christians moved there from their respective places of persecution.

Among these immigrants was a black man from the West Indies by the name of Anthony. After he came to meet the brothers, he discussed with them the condition in the West Indies. Some brothers felt the need to go and preach the gospel there. Through the casting of lots, they selected a few workers to go with Anthony on a mission. This was the first foreign missionary enterprise, around 1732. From that time on, missionaries were produced

from among them, and the Moravian Church became the strongest missionary body at that time. Their believers spread to every corner of the world.

At the same time there was a new discovery within the Catholic Church. A group of spiritual people were raised up by the Lord. The most spiritual one among them was Miguel de Molinos, who was born in 1640 and died in 1697. He wrote a book called *Spiritual Guide* which taught men the way to deny themselves and die with the Lord. This book affected many people at that time. One of his contemporaries was Madame Guyon. She was born in 1648 and died in 1717. She was even more knowledgeable in the matters of the union with God's will and the denial of the self. Her autobiography is a very good spiritual book. In addition there was Father Fenelon who was a bishop at that time. He was very willing to suffer for the Lord, and he worked together with Madame Guyon. Through these men and women, God released many spiritual messages. At that time men and women with the deepest experience of spiritual life were found in the Catholic Church. Protestantism was only paying attention to the doctrine of justification by faith.

Along with these three persons, there was Gottfried Arnold. He wrote many books concerning questions of the church. He considered that the church at that time had deviated from the truth and that it must return to the proper ground as revealed in the New Testament before it could be built up. Here we can see two flows. One came from believers like Molinos, Madame Guyon, and Fenelon. The other flow came from men represented by Arnold. In our magazine, *The Present Testimony*, we have published Madame Guyon's "Flow of the Spirit." Through her writings, one can see that she was indeed a very spiritual person. Concerning Arnold, he recovered mostly the outward matters. He proposed that Christians return to the scriptural ground of the New Testament.

These two flows eventually merged into one. In 1700 the church in "Philadelphia" was raised up. *Philadelphia* means brotherly love. At that time, when men read Revelation 2 and 3, they realized that Protestantism had indeed come out of Catholicism. However, the result was only the church in Sardis; there was not yet a full recovery.

When such groups were raised up, unlike other organizations, they did not call people to come out of their original organizations. They did not insist that others leave their denominations. On the contrary, they merely held meetings everywhere. From 1670 on, their testimony was found in England. In Leeds, Bradford, and other places, their meetings were raised up one after another. They were the strongest witnesses in the eighteenth century. While Zinzendorf was still alive, he tried once to

absorb this movement into his Moravian Church. However, he did not succeed.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, a great revival broke out in England. In 1729 the two Wesley brothers were raised up by God. They were called the Methodists. Through them, God brought in a great tide of revival. This was the beginning of the Methodist Church. The Wesley brothers were the prime figures of the eighteenth century. Before John Wesley was saved, he strove to be good. Later he went to America to be a missionary. At that point he was not yet saved. He testified that although he had heard the truth of justification by faith, he could not understand it. Later a Moravian brother helped him and told him, "Just preach justification by faith to others until you yourself are assured that you are justified by faith." A short while after this, he was saved. After their salvation, the two brothers immediately began to preach this message everywhere. At that time men were not allowed to preach in the open air but could speak only in a church sanctuary because the church at that time considered that the holy Word could be proclaimed only in a holy sanctuary. However, these two brothers together with George Whitefield began to hold open-air meetings and bring people to the Lord in this way. The main subject of John Wesley's messages was the doctrine of sanctification. The teaching of the eradication of sin began with him, although he also told others that sanctification came by faith.

After Wesley died, the overseas missionary movement began. The first organization to be established was the London Missionary Society. This organization began as a non-denominational institution but later came under the direction of the Congregationalists. By 1799 the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.) was formed. It belonged to the Anglican Church. The Methodists also expanded the scope of their mission organization and became the Methodist Missionary Society of today.

In conclusion, the reforms of the sixteenth century were widespread, while the reforms of the eighteenth century were not. The reforms of the sixteenth century affected the world not only spiritually but politically and socially as well. Those reforms of the eighteenth century exercised their influence mainly on the spiritual side. Of all the movements in the eighteenth century, the most noteworthy was the testimony of the "Philadelphia" church. They assimilated all of the previous major recoveries. Among them, one can find all of the major truths.

The Discovery of God's Truth in the Nineteenth Century

Now let us consider the nineteenth century. This century saw a full revival. First, we will consider John Nelson Darby and the revival that he represented.

In 1827 a group of people were raised up in Dublin, Ireland. Among them were men like Edward Cronin and Anthony Norris Groves. They saw that many things in the church were dead, lifeless, and formal. They began to ask the Lord to show them the church according to the biblical revelation. Through prayer and fellowship, they felt that they should rise up and meet according to the principle of 1 Corinthians 14. As a result, they began to break bread at a brother's home. A short while later, a former Anglican minister, John Nelson Darby, began to join their meeting and to expound the Bible among them. Gradually, more and more expositors were raised up among them, such as William Kelly, C. H. Mackintosh, B. W. Newton, and J. G. Bellett. Through reading their books, I received light to see the error of denominational organizations and to realize that there is only one Body of Christ. The church should not be formed by human opinions but should be under the direct leading of the Holy Spirit. When we consider the present-day church organizations, we see many human traditions and opinions and little direct leading of the Holy Spirit. This is not according to God's desire. In God's will, the church should not be under man's control; it should be directed only by the Holy Spirit. All those who belong to the Lord should learn to be led by the Holy Spirit and should not follow man's direction. These are all truths discovered by the Brethren.

In addition, the Brethren made many discoveries concerning the millennium, the question of rapture, and the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation. They were the most prominent expositors of the various types in the Old Testament. The commentary on the Pentateuch by C. H. Mackintosh is the authority in its category. The evangelist D. L. Moody highly recommended it. The Brethren also made a clear separation between the biblical prophecies concerning the Jews and those concerning the church. A hundred years ago, many people confused the prophecies concerning the Jews with those for the church. They considered that the prophecies concerning the Jews were already fulfilled in the church. In addition to these matters, the Brethren also produced many other writings.

During this period, many spiritual brothers were being raised up in England. In addition to those named above, there were brothers like Charles Stanley and George Cutting. The latter wrote a little book called *Safety, Certainty, and Enjoyment*. It tells people that they can have the assurance of salvation. This book has already been translated into Chinese. The truths concerning the gospel were fully recovered through these brothers.

Besides these brothers there was Robert Govett who saw the matter of Christian reward. He discovered that while it is true that a man is saved by faith, he is rewarded according to his works before God. Salvation is a matter of life, while reward is a matter of living. C. H. Spurgeon once

said that Govett was a hundred years ahead of his time because his teachings were so profound. Govett told people that there is the possibility that Christians will be excluded from the millennium. Therefore, a believer must be faithful and diligent. Second, he taught that not all believers will be raptured before the tribulation. Only those overcoming and faithful believers will participate in this rapture.

Expositors were raised up one after another during this period. Another very spiritual brother of great renown was G. H. Pember. He wrote many commentaries. There were others also such as D. M. Panton and Hudson Taylor. The latter wrote a book *Union and Communion*, which speaks of some profound experiences in Christ. The above-mentioned truths were all great discoveries. Although these different truths of God were recovered, they cannot be considered God's most central truth.

Afterward God raised up George Müller in England. He learned many excellent lessons concerning prayer and concerning faith in God's word. He taught that man should claim God's promises through prayer, and he testified of his way of living by faith in relation to financial needs.

In the United States there was the Christian and Missionary Alliance. The prominent ones among them were A. B. Simpson, A. J. Gordon, and others. They were all very influential. Even Hudson Taylor in England was affected by them. They saw that believers should return to the experience of the apostolic age when men lived by faith. This was a tremendous revelation at that time. Of course, this truth has become widely known among us today.

Gordon and Simpson also discovered the truth concerning divine healing and began to experience it. This matter spread quickly and was much publicized, and many were attracted. However, Simpson emphasized that it was not the healing but the resurrection life that overcame the weaknesses of the flesh. He taught that one can triumph over sickness through knowing Christ as the power and the Deliverer.

At the same time another group of people were raised up who paid attention to the inner life. About sixty years ago, God gained a porcelain merchant by the name of Robert Pearsall Smith. He saw that sanctification comes through consecration. This kind of sanctification is quite different from the sanctification that Wesley spoke of. Smith's kind of sanctification came through consecration and faith. The sanctification that Wesley preached was a life that one gradually attains to after consecration. Actually, both teachings are of the truth. After the line of Smith, there was Mrs. Hannah Whitall Smith who wrote the book *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*. There were also others like Stocknell (?), Evan Hopkins, and Andrew Murray. They continued the line of truth concerning self-denial preached

by ones like Madame Guyon two hundred years earlier in the Catholic Church. These believers began to conduct conferences in Germany, England, and other places. These conferences were the beginning of what we know today as the Keswick Convention. The main speaker at these conventions was Evan Hopkins. He received help both from Smith and from others like Madame Guyon and exerted a definite spiritual influence in that period of time. Although the truth released by Madame Guyon has never been popular throughout church history, it has exercised a profound spiritual influence upon many people. Even Wesley received help from her. John Wesley once said that he wished every believer would read the messages of Madame Guyon and that he owed much grace to her. God gained such a woman in the seventeenth century and through her brought in the main current of the nineteenth century.

In addition to Hopkins, there was H. C. Trumbull who released the truth on the overcoming life at the Keswick Convention. These messages brought in a great recovery concerning the knowledge of the overcoming life and the way for believers to experience this overcoming life in their living.

After Hopkins, God gained another sister, Mrs. Jessie Penn-Lewis. This sister was very weak physically during the early stages of her life. She was always bedridden. While sick in bed, she read the writings of Madame Guyon and embraced them as her bedside companion. She, however, could not believe that the kind of total self-denial, faith, and love described in these writings could ever be practiced. One day while disputing and arguing with God, she sought desperately for the Lord to bring her into these truths. The Lord heard her prayer. From that time on, she was raised up by the Lord to preach the truth of the cross.

Brother Holden, an ex-missionary of the China Inland Mission, came to know the meaning of the cross through reading Mrs. Penn-Lewis's books. Mrs. Penn-Lewis was one who truly bore the cross. Through her experiences, many believers were attracted to pursue the truth concerning the cross. Through these men and women, God led many to realize that the centrality of God's work is the cross. The cross is the foundation for all spiritual matters. Without the work of the cross, a person will not know what is death and what is sin. Many spiritual persons received great help through her. Through the messages she preached, God granted deliverance to many. We can see that the discovery of God's truth is progressive; the more it advances, the more complete it becomes. By the end of the nineteenth century, almost all of the truths had been recovered.

The Advance of Truth in the Twentieth Century

Now we come to the twentieth century. Two great events

occurred in the twentieth century. The first was the Chinese Boxer Rebellion of 1900. During this rebellion many Christians were martyred. The second event was the great Welsh Revival of 1904. During this revival many towns saw their whole population saved to such an extent that there were no more souls to save. Many phenomena of Pentecost were manifested among them.

The leader of this revival was Evan Roberts, a twenty-two-year-old coal miner. He had not received much education. God called such a one from among the lowly and gave him a partner, Hastwell (?). After he was saved, Roberts often prayed earnestly in the coal mines. His only prayer was, "Lord, bend the church to save the world." Those around him were both bewildered as well as impressed. Gradually, more people joined him in prayer, and soon the entire mine was affected. Many miners rose up to pray. The revival began to spread to the entire region of southern England.

From them we have learned two truths: first, the revival work of the Holy Spirit is brought in through a group of people who are bent and subdued. We do not need to ask God to send us an outward revival. We only need to ask Him to subdue us in a deeper and fresher way. Then life will spontaneously flow out from our being.

Second, from this time on, many began to understand the work of the evil spirits. Before this time, although men talked about this subject, their knowledge of it was not thorough. Brother Roberts understood what spiritual warfare meant. The experience of Ephesians 6 was not thoroughly apprehended until his time.

In 1908 while he was lying on his sickbed, he told of his experience of warfare with the evil spirits to Mr. and Mrs. Penn-Lewis. Based on this understanding and the latter's personal experience, she wrote the book *War on the Saints* which helped many deceived believers become free. During the past few years, almost all of the messages talked about among spiritual believers have been the teachings of Mrs. Penn-Lewis. They are truths concerning spiritual warfare and the cross.

At the same time that this revival was going on, another new work began in Los Angeles in the United States. From 1908 to 1909, a number of black believers on Azusa Street experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit and began to speak in tongues. Concerning tongue-speaking, it is true that the practice among many is extreme and improper. Of course, we do not nullify altogether the place of tongue-speaking. We should help others have this Pentecostal experience. Paul's teaching was, on the one hand, that not all speak in tongues (1 Cor. 12:30). On the other hand, he told us, "Do not forbid the speaking in tongues" (14:39). The first verse is for those who overemphasize

this matter. The second verse is for those who overlook this matter. We should take note of both aspects.

These individuals saw that the prophecy of Joel 2 was only partially fulfilled at the time of the apostles and that the day of the latter rain must come before the complete fulfillment occurs. Spiritually speaking, "the day of the latter rain" refers to today.

God's Work Today and the Cumulative Revelations of God

From the above discussion we can see the different discoveries of God's truths that took place before and during this century. Now we need to ask: what is God's work in China today? What kind of work is God doing today?

Immediately after I was saved, I heard many teachings from the foreign missionaries. Prior to 1920 it was difficult in China even to hear a message on salvation. After 1920 many messages were preached concerning salvation, justification, and regeneration. Before that time, many people did not even know about salvation. At present there are over one hundred and fifty different kinds of denominations. God showed us the error of denominationalism and the mistake of sectarianism. For this reason we began to preach these messages. Later God began to show us one by one the different truths, that is, the truths that we mentioned earlier. Gradually, we began to see the victory of Christ, the resurrection life, the teaching of the cross, the work of the Holy Spirit, and so forth. Everywhere in China men began to understand these things. In the course of our conversation with the Western missionaries, we discovered that many of these truths were also recovered in the same way in the West.

We know that God's truths are cumulative; later truths do not negate earlier ones. All the past truths of God form the foundation of the truths today. What we see today are the cumulative revelations of God. When God opens our eyes to see this fact, we begin to realize that we are living in the tide of God's will. This tide is a continuation of all the past works of God in previous ages.

From 1926 on, we began to release many messages concerning salvation, the church, and the cross, and we testified much concerning these things. By 1927 we concentrated our attention on the subjective work of the cross. We saw that concerning the cross, there is not only the truth concerning Christ's death, but there is also the fact of resurrection. In the past the resurrection which we preached was mainly a matter of faith; it was not related to our experience. What we speak of today is resurrection as a principle of life. It is not just a doctrine but a spiritual fact. It is like a grain of wheat that dies and brings forth many grains; it is the principle of resurrection. After this,

God showed us what the Body of Christ is and where the reality of this Body is. We began to realize that as there is only one life of Christ, there is only one church.

Personally, I received much help from Mrs. Penn-Lewis. In England Mr. Austin-Sparks also received much help from her. Brother Sparks was a pastor in a Baptist chapel in southeast London. Later the Lord showed him different truths concerning the meaning of resurrection and the meaning of the church life.

We cannot say that the aforementioned truths did not exist before today. However, they have not been revealed as clearly as today. In spite of this, prior to 1928, we did not mention anything concerning the central matters of God. By February of 1928, we began to mention something concerning God's eternal purpose. From that time on, we began to tell people what God's eternal purpose is. In that year, we had our first Overcomer Conference. Afterward, we had a second Overcomer Conference. All of the things mentioned in these conferences were matters related to God's central theme.

Despite the above revelations, it was not until 1934 that we realized that the centrality of everything related to God is Christ. Christ is God's centrality and God's universality. All of God's plan is related to Christ. This is the truth that God is pleased to reveal to us in these days. It is also the message we are preaching during this conference. This is what God showed Brother Sparks also. He saw much of the truth concerning God's overcomers.

God's overcomers are a group of people who take the lead to stand in the place of death on behalf of the whole congregation. Their relationship with the church is that of Zion's relationship with Jerusalem. All of God's requirements fall upon Zion. When Zion is gained, Jerusalem is gained. When both Zion and Jerusalem are secured, God's purpose is fulfilled.

Our hearts are full of thanksgiving to God. From all these brothers we have received much help. As Paul said, "Neither did I receive it from man" (Gal. 1:12). In the same way, we can say that although we have received help from our brothers, these revelations were not received from man. We received help from Luther, Zinzendorf, the Moravian Brethren, and the Keswick messages. Today we believe that God's ultimate goal is to have Christ as everything. One elderly pastor, Dr. E. B. Meyer, also saw this matter. However, by then he was already over ninety years old and could not do much work. I believe that God has only one work today. It is the message of Colossians 1:18 which says that God desires to see Christ have the first place in all things. The basis of everything is the death, the resurrection, and the ascension of Christ. Other than Christ, there is no spiritual reality. This is God's "present truth."

Sounding Out a Call

Hence, what are we doing today? We should answer as John the Baptist did that we are a voice in the wilderness (John 1:23). Our work is to sound out the call to God's children to return to God's central purpose, to take Christ as the center of all things, and to take His death, resurrection, and ascension as the basis of everything. This is the message of Colossians 1 and 3. We know the position of the church in the New Testament. We realize that this position is lofty and spiritual. We thank God for the help rendered to us from the Western missionaries. Yet God is showing us today that we should bring everything back to God's central purpose. Our work today is to return to the biblical ground of the church.

All of God's truth has the church as the starting point. Paul was first put in the church in Antioch. Later he was sent out from the church in Antioch. All of the truths that we preach today have the church as the starting point. This is our work and this is our testimony.

We should mention the miscellaneous truths less. We should do everything we can to show people that the Lord is the Head over all things. We are not here disrupting churches. Rather, we are here returning to the initial work of the apostles. We have to be careful about everything that we do. Everything that is of man we must learn to reject, and everything that is of God we must strive to attain.

We thank God that we can touch God's grand purpose. We need to humble and prostrate ourselves and to deny ourselves. We need to be clear that our work today is not just to save some souls or to help others become spiritual. Our goal is indeed the greatest and the most glorious. Thank God that we can know God's "present truth." May God be gracious to us so that we do not become the castaways of the "present truth." May we be watchful, and may we not allow the flesh to come in or the self to gain any ground. May God's will be accomplished in us.

Four Responsibilities Today

Finally, I would like to add a few words. We have four responsibilities today: (1) Concerning the sinners, we have to preach the gospel. (2) Concerning Satan, we have to realize there is a spiritual warfare. (3) Concerning the church, we have to hold fast what we see today. (4) Concerning Christ, we should testify of the fact of His preeminence in all things. Today this testimony can be found in America, England, France, Spain, Africa, and everywhere. However, the number is not great. Outwardly speaking, their condition is also very poor. We should pray for these places. LFC