

The Bearing of This Position Upon the Church, Missions and Prayer

by F.J. Huegel

The sermon emphasizes the revolutionary impact of the Cross on the believer's life, relationships, and mission, calling for a complete renunciation of the old-life and a full participation in Christ's death and resurrection.

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 2:20, Colossians 2:16

Topics: "Unity in Christ", "The Power of the Cross"

Description

F.J. Huegel emphasizes the transformative power of identifying with Christ's death and resurrection, which radically alters a believer's relationship with the Church, missions, and prayer. He argues that true unity among believers transcends denominational boundaries, as they are bound by their shared life in Christ rather than ecclesiastical structures. In missions, Huegel highlights the necessity of preaching a gospel that emphasizes inner transformation through the Cross, rather than mere outward adherence to forms. He asserts that effective prayer arises from a life surrendered to Christ, enabling believers to commune with God and achieve powerful results. Ultimately, Huegel calls for a pure Christianity that renounces selfishness and embraces the life-giving love of Christ to heal both individuals and nations.

Transcript

1. Its Bearing Upon the Church

That the position which we have been considering is revolutionary, involving radical readjustments in all phases of the Christian life, we would not deny. As never before, "old things are passed away and all things are become new." The believer becomes "a new creature," the old life having been terminated by the Cross of Christ, an ever-deeper participation in which, results in an ever-fuller participation in the power of the Resurrection.

That such a position should greatly affect the believer's relation to the Church as a visible organization is, of course, to be expected. In one sense it unhinges him. His attachment to the true Church, which is the mystic-Body of Christ, becomes so deep, and so real, that he feels himself somewhat detached from the visible Church as it has been organized (perhaps I should say disorganized) by man. In dying to the "self-life," he naturally dies to all that is nurtured by the "self-life." This means that the Church itself, regarded as a, visible organization, in so far as it is out of line with the Holy Spirit (and no one even among its most devoted servants will deny that it is in many aspects of its life out of line), in so far as it may give

place to the "carnal life" which expresses itself in strife, sectarian greed, class distinctions, unsound doctrines, racial antipathies, and the like—the Church, I repeat, in so far as it fails to express the mind of Christ, simply fails to grip him. He dies to every form of the "carnal-life" whether in the Church, or out.

The tie which now binds him to Christ is so strong that he finds himself bound to all those who, regardless of denominational affiliations, are enjoying like precious faith. If he is, for example, a Methodist, he finds himself as much at home in the presence of Episcopalians, or Baptists, or Presbyterians, and experiences a spiritual oneness as deep and as precious with those of other Christian organizations who have been rooted into Christ, as with those of his own Church affiliation. It is no longer a question of ecclesiastical procedure, but of life. The rising tide of Divine life, once it rises high enough (it is forever overflowing all of its banks in those who have learned to stand with Christ in His "death-resurrection-mid-process") simply wipes out the great ecclesiastical barriers; the mighty walls of the sects, disappear. One could no more realize a deep oneness with Christ in death, and in resurrection, and not realize a profound oneness with all those who receive the same influx of Heavenly life, whatever their denominational affiliations, than one could be a member of some particular family and not be bound to the members of that family.

This does not mean, of course, that we may not have our preferences. It does not mean that we cease to be Baptists, or Presbyterians, or Disciples, or Lutherans, as the case may be; any more than we cease to be Frenchmen, or

Englishmen, or Americans, or Germans. We are not pleading for organic unity. Organic unity could never bring about the kind of unity of which we speak; nor could denominational differences, once it exists, dissolve it.

We are seated with Christ in Heavenly places, and from this high rampart we look out upon life, conscious that we are free from its petty strife. Race prejudices can no longer affect us. Class distinctions have been swept away. Sectarian grooves can no longer contain our sympathies. The great discordant force of the universe-mother of all sin—so far as we are concerned has been put to naught. Christ's Cross has created for us a new and harmonious universe. Our love (the love of Christ constraining us) flows out in sympathetic yearnings for the welfare of all men. "Come with me, my Spouse," says the Beloved of Canticles, who is Christ, "look from the top . . ." (Canticles iv. 10).

As regards the ceremonies of the Church we cease, of course, to rest upon them. I do not say that we cease to adhere to the forms of our particular Church. They have their place. The means of grace will always be essential. By saying that we cease to rest upon them, I mean to say that we no longer look upon the sign as the thing signified. For instance, Baptism could never be anything more than a Divinely-instituted rite, signifying an inner renovation. We are "buried with Him in baptism, wherein also we are risen with Him." Baptism points the way to the spiritual participation of the believer in Christ's death; as it also is symbolic of his resurrection with Christ. But if this spiritual union has never been realized (and without a full and irreversible surrender to Christ it never can be, forms or no) dare we rest in forms? If, as Paul says, a violation of the law made a Jew's circumcision uncircumcision; shall we not say that a Christian's violation of the principles of union with Christ makes his baptism equally void? "The flesh profiteth nothing, it is the Spirit that quickeneth." Would a bride be content with the outer trappings, a ring, a church ceremony, legal recognition, etc., in that which has to do with her nuptials, if her husband is living in whoredoms? Does she not rightfully demand fellowship, faithfulness, love, purity, in a word, oneness of spirit? Will the Heavenly Bridegroom be satisfied with ceremonies, forms, and empty symbols, if we are not His in spirit? He took us with Himself to the Cross to annihilate forever the "self-life," and all that which

would come between Him and those of His Household, that He might unite them to Himself in holy, spiritual wedlock. Dare we offer Him the trappings and withhold the reality? "Let no man therefore judge you in meat or drink, or in respect of an holy day, or the new moon, or the Sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ" (Col. ii. 16-17).

2. Its Bearing Upon Missions

It is, however, in the field of missions and missionary endeavour that the effect of this position is most telling. It is here that I have myself put to the test this principle of identification with Christ in death and resurrection. The result has been so overwhelmingly satisfying, so farreaching, so incalculably blessed, that I look upon the years prior to the experiencing of the power of the Cross, as wellnigh wasted. I walked with an uncertain step; I aimed at an uncertain goal; I employed uncertain weapons; I garnered exceedingly unsatisfying fruits. I see now that much of my labour was not only unsatisfactory, but positively harmful.

I preached Christ in the power of a "self-originated" fervor and consequently mutilated Him. It gave Him no chance to reveal His true self. Christ must be preached in the power of a Christ-centered, Christ-possessed, Christempowered life. Christ is never truly preached until the one who bears the message is himself so hidden away with Him in God, that it is no longer the messenger who speaks, but Christ speaking through him. He (the messenger) must learn to bury himself in the Saviour's wounds, so to speak, and die to his own life, if he would present Christ in Apostolic fashion to perishing souls. Rivers of living water must accompany the message-the listener must be inundated in a Divine life, if he is to be given a chance to appraise the Christ of God, and see Him in His true glory. Unless the gospel is preached with "the power of the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven" it is not the gospel at all, no matter how true one might be to "the letter." "The letter killeth-it is the Spirit that giveth life."

Christian leaders in all lands are painfully aware of the fact that missions today are passing through a crisis. The triumphant note of a half-century ago is gone. From all lands comes the word-and the confession is made by missionaries themselves-that missions are not duplicating the sort of thing we find in the Book of Acts. The great expanding machinery of missions moves as never before since the Saviour issued the Great Commission, and yet, missions are not breaking the power of the "old-life" of heathenism. Converts are not the Christ-empowered, Christ-centered, Christ-possessed Christians, radiant with the joy of a Heavenly life, which Divine grace can make of them. Of course, there are outstanding exceptions in all mission fields, but the fact remains that things are at lowebb as regards missionary endeavour the world over.

The crux of the whole matter lies in the fact that we have not exalted the Cross. A watered-down gospel may win adepts in heathen lands, but it can never bring about results that will be satisfactory to Him, who at so great a cost consummated the work of redemption on Calvary's Tree. Nor, can it cope with the mighty forces of heathenism, break their power, and cause to operate the redeeming force of Divine grace in their place. Only a gospel which brings souls to the experience of an inner crucifixion (death of the old-life), and a glorious resurrection as a result of union with Christ, can ever do that. Unless converts experience an inner union with Christ (and such a union is possible only on the basis of the Cross, i.e. the "oldlife" committed to death with Christ), however much they may struggle to imitate Him, or however much they may succeed in glossing over the "old-man" with the veneer of ecclesiastical forms and of Christian culture, such a counterfeiting of the Christian life, sincere as it may be, will sooner or later break down under the strain to which it must be subjected in non-Christian lands.

3. Its Bearing Upon Prayer

When we come to consider prayer in the light of "Co-crucifixion," as this position may be denominated, we find that prayer first comes to its own on this basis. Prayer is nothing if it is not communion, and true communion is only possible when the "old-life" which cannot have fellowship with God, inasmuch as in Christ it was condemned and potentially put to death, is terminated.

The reason why many are finding prayer so unsatisfactory and the life of prayer so unattractive, is because they have attempted to enter into the celestial realms of prayer in the strength of the "old-man." The "old-man" can no more wield these weapons, which "are not carnal but mighty through God," than he can "love his enemies," or "rejoice always," or "have the mind which was in Christ Jesus," or fulfil any other Christian grace. He (the oldman) may imitate these graces, but actually possess their, never. They are "the fruits of the Spirit." They come from above. They are the outworkings of the Christnature imparted to the believer and incorporated in his being on the basis of the Cross, i.e. a removal of the old nature by a participation in Christ's death.

True prayer can only be inaugurated on the basis of "co-crucifixion." This is the prime condition. "If ye abide in Me and I in you, ye shall ask whatsoever ye will and it shall be done unto you." We must be "in Christ." But we cannot be in Christ in the fullest sense, without that we commit to death in the power of the Saviour's death (which in the mind of God was corporate, we having been crucified with Christ), the "old-life."

It is when we realize our oneness with Christ in death, and in resurrection, that prayer becomes the marvellous force that we find it was in the life of the Saviour; the invincible dynamic that it reveals itself to be in the book of Acts; and the ineffable experience of the great saints of the ages. It is then that our spirits, liberated by the power of the Cross, from the fleshly and the soulish entanglements, "mount up on wings as eagles." It is then that communion with the infinitely adorable One who inhabiteth Eternity, comes spontaneously and naturally to its fullest expression. It is then that the injunction: "Pray without ceasing," ceases to be an unintelligible command; for the spirit released from the thralldom of the "fleshlife," and freed from all Satanic oppression by an appropriation of the full benefits of the Calvary victory, rises to take its place with Christ in the Heavenlies where prayer is the continuous in-breathing of the life of God. It is then that prayer, energized by the Spirit of the living God, which it cannot be until it is freed from all selfish ingredients, becomes at times a groaning which is unutterable, and which does not fail to move mountains, and achieve the impossible. It is then that prayer becomes a working out of the will of God, and therefore, must prevail, be the difficulties what they may, however staggering the problem, however great the need. It is then that the great disparity between what the Master said that prayer would accomplish, and the miserable caricature that it is in the actual practice of millions, is removed, and prayer blossoms out in all the glory of its true nature.

Seeing prayer in the light of the Cross and our participation in the Saviour's death, and resurrection, we are not the least surprised over the achievements of some of the great prayer-warriors of the Churchviz. Hudson Taylor and a few fellow-workers praying for a thousand workers to be thrust into China, with the result that the Lord gave them not a thousand, but eleven hundred and fifty-four; George Muller, of Bristol, receiving in answer to prayer, millions of dollars for the support of his many orphans; David Brainerd wrestling with God in the forests of New England for a great revival, not only among his beloved Indians, but for great ingatherings of souls throughout the whole world, and thus becoming, according to some of the historians of missions, the prime factor in ushering in the great era of Modern Missions. Such

achievements abound in the life and work of those who have known the Lord Jesus, and the power of His resurrection and who, like Paul, have had fellowship with Him in His sufferings "being made conformable unto His death" (Phil. iii. 10).

May it not be that the great world crisis, with its economic, financial and moral agonies, which has enveloped the nations in the dark clouds of pessimism, is due after all to the spiritual decrepitude of the Church? The Church is the Divine agency for the redemption of the nations. What they are going through, inasmuch as they are absolutely dependent upon Christ and His Church for the development of the moral and spiritual life-forces, without which nations as well as individuals become reeking carcasses of corruption-what they are going through, I repeat, is a sure index to the state of organized Christianity. The pending suicide of civilization which verily is causing men's hearts to fail them for fear, can only be averted by that Divine impact which is the Spirit of Christ operating within the hearts of men, and which again and again, as history only too clearly reveals, has brought the nations out of chaos and charged them with new vigor and hope. The crying need of the day, as it has been of all times, is the expulsion of the monster of selfishness from the hearts of men and the opening up of the floodgates in the life of the nations for the free circulation of the great love of Christ. There is no other healing for the nations, there is no other hope for the individual soul.

Shall we not then give place to a pure Christianity? Christ cannot possess us, and cause the rivers of Living Water which He has promised, to flow forth from our hearts with healing, renovating, transforming, abounding force, unless we are willing to be dispossessed of our own life. Christ will not rear His edifices upon the old foundations of selfishness. It is not a case of simply denying ourselves certain things; but of a complete renunciation of ourselves. Christ took us with Himself to the Cross. The so-called Adamic life was potentially terminated at Calvary. Shall we not, drawn by that love which so moved the Saviour that He was willing to be spat upon, willing to hang between two criminals while the mob jeered, willing to be trampled under foot as though He were a despicable thing, that we might have Life-shall we not respond, with glad surrender to the unfathomable yearnings of the Crucified?

He would have us share His Cross-He would have us divorced from the carnal mind, which is enmity with God, by a participation in His own death. Into His death we have been baptized (Rom. vi. 3). If we are followers of Christ, then His death to sin is our death to sin-His resurrection, our resurrection-His victory, our victory-His ascension, our ascension. God grant to us the grace to claim our full heritage that thus we may be more than conquerors. "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen" (Jude 24-25) .

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