

Life of the Spirit

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THE OPENING OF A RETREAT¹

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WE all of us realise that our supreme purpose is God. We have no other end; this is our natural end, our purpose, why we exist—union with God. It is the only thing we are here for. Also we believe that the union begun here is only finally got at across death—attained on the other side of death. Union with God is reached when we reach him in heaven—then only. We live by faith, we don't *know* here, we do hereafter. We cannot help the thought sometimes, 'supposing it isn't true!' Only the dead *know*—we live by *faith*.

God is our purpose. It is our one business to get nearer to God. You know yourself, don't you? Your insufficiency, temptations, sins. You have examined your conscience, confessed your sins of commission and perhaps greater sins still of omission, you know what you could and should have done, the great gulf that separates and shrouds God—God in his wisdom, God in his beauty, God in his love. And yet you have got to meet—you and God. Absolute Truth with your miserable untruth, Wisdom with your blindness, Strength with your wincing and shrinking, Generosity with your desperate selfishness. How can they meet? It is impossible to mix fire and water, and yet we know we are made for God, for union with him. How? We know how. Christ our Lord is the bridge across the gulf. 'I am the Way'. He is the one Mediator, our great High Priest who stands midway. It is the office of a priest to give God to us and us to God, giving to each the other. He deals individually with us. He ransomed us by his blood. *He* is the one thing uniting us to God—'through Christ our Lord'—'He that hath the Son hath life'—'I and the Father are one'. God was enshrined in the infant who lay in the manger, in the Man who toiled upon the earth and died on the cross. You get at God through this Mediator. He justifies your every action from the first moment of rising in the morning, every paltry deed we do

¹ From a retreat preached in Edinburgh in July, 1930.

through him in union with God. Thus is union between my soul and God made possible. The Apostle said 'Show us the Father, only that and it is enough' and our Lord answered 'There is no need; I and the Father are one'.

God is our supreme purpose. Christ is the way along which we trudge, he is the link, he had our pitiful human nature and he was tempted as we are and sat weary by the well and thirsted on the Cross. This human body of ours so badly expresses this great wide soul reaching from horizon to horizon—it badly fails, doesn't it? How difficult we find it even to say what we would to a friend in trouble or to one who has been unexpectedly generous to us; our faltering speech can only say 'I am sorry' and leave it at that, or 'thank you', and neither our eyes nor our words can show anything of the sorrow or gratitude within us. Our humanity couldn't express God. What we see in the life of Christ is his humanity, his human nature; what was hidden is divine. We approach and kneel and receive Bread; we only see his human nature, but it is God. 'He that hath the Son hath life'.

A retreat is to help us to get nearer to God—not bothering and worrying about ourselves—No, we shall never know him by that. He comes to us in his own strange ways; 'whatsoever you did unto the least of these my brethren you did it unto me'. We shall some day know and see God and the retreat is to help us to know him—him, not myself. Examine God, not self. We are too busy scraping about in the dust to look at the stars, and they are more interesting. Look up at God. If we only knew him we should be swept off our feet with love; that is what Heaven is, just seeing God. Our whole heart cries out for God—to know him better, to love him more. More of God—less of self.