ATTUNED TO THE SPIRIT OF GOD

Zeph. 3:15-17.

LET us imagine ourselves upon a lovely afternoon climbing a hill, which is reflected, even to each blade of grass, in the still water of a lake that nestles at its foot. If we cast a pebble into the centre of the lake, concentric circles will be at once created, which will continue to enlarge, until they break in simultaneous music all round the shore.

I have been told that in South Africa news is transmitted among the natives with almost the speed of the telegraph. A man will climb a lofty eminence and announce his message in a clear, strong voice. Immediately the concentric wave of sound will radiate outward, to be caught up at various points, north, south, east, and west, of the ever-widening circle, and be passed on in fresh concentric vibrations of sound.

The same phenomenon is supplied in wireless telegraphy. When a message is sent forth from "the transmitter," the concentric waves of ether bear it forward to every point of the compass; and thus the message may be picked up at any point on the circumference, just as though it had been directed to that point alone. Take, for instance, a ship in distress. Her need, her precise position in the ocean, her call for help, are transmitted to the surrounding atmosphere of ether, and the concentric ether waves carry it out in all directions to every ship in the ever-increasing circle which is equipped with a Marconi receiver attuned to the transmitter. Of course, where a ship is not so equipped, or where its receiver is out of order and not perfectly attuned to the transmitter, the news and its summons will not be picked up. However dire the need or urgent the call, each will be in vain, even though the ship is within easy reach; whereas any vessels that are in perfect accord will become at once aware of their needed assistance and will divert their course, through vast distances, to succor an endangered crew. Similarly ships without receivers, or receivers out of tune, would know nothing about important or joyful tidings, which were being radioed through the world. On one of my ocean voyages we had an instance of a wireless message, the diameter of whose circle was at least 20,000 miles!

Let us apply this thought! Concentric waves of power and love are always circling out from the divine Transmitter. When our natures are attuned to God, by the yielding of our wills to Him, we receive of His fulness, and grace upon grace. On the contrary, we are oblivious of the waves that are beating around us, if our will is not at one with His. God forces none, for love cannot compel. His service is perfect freedom. The thing which hinders us is that our wills are not in harmony with His. God never seeks His own will; we do. There is no other way to blessedness than to ask Him to take our will and harmonize it with His own, though the transfer involves the Cross.

There are at least five of these concentric circles which are throbbing around us continually; but, alas, in too many cases, the waves of divine grace meet with no reciprocity. Our hearts are out of tune. What we need, and might have, reaches us, but there is no response from our hearts because we have never been attuned.

"God is in the midst of her; God will help her, and that right early "---concentric waves of help!
"Where two or three are gathered in my Name, there am I in the midst "---concentric waves of power for intercession.
"There they crucified him, and two others with him, but Jesus in the midst "---concentric waves of salvation.
"The Lamb in the midst of the throne "---concentric waves of victory.
"The Lord in the midst of thee is mighty. He will save. He will be silent in his love. He will rejoice over thee with singing "---concentric waves of divine love, too great to be expressed in human speech.

Such is the impact of God! There are the waves which are breaking over the universe, and of which every man, woman, and child, spirits of the just made perfect and angels of light, may partake on the sole condition of being attuned to His ever-Messed nature, "They that receive the abundance of grace shall reign" here and now.

An interesting illustration of the attunement of the human with the divine is given in a well-known passage in the third Gospel: "Then drew near the publicans and sinners to hear him" (Luke 15:1). These instruments that had been badly jangled were being brought into symphony. "But the Pharisees and scribes murmured" (Luke 15:2). That murmur indicated their obstinate dissonance. Religious professors may live and die in outward contact with the Transmitter, yet be absolutely deaf to the music of His love.
The father in the parable carried in his heart the norm or rhythm of the blessed life. The music of it filled his heart and radiated forth. It was there before the younger son asked for his portion of goods; there when the wayward lad took his journey; there when his wayworn figure appeared on the sky-line. It found its befitting expression in the music which circled out from the banquet, and arrested the attention of the elder brother. It was throbbing around the two, when the father came out to urge him to enter. May we not say reverently that from the throne of God and of the Lamb these waves of love are constantly welling forth, and pouring over the world! This is their central chord: "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine." These words contain God's ideal for us all. To this He invites us!

(1) There is Community of Nature. The Greek word is emphatic. It is sonship, not by adoption but by birth, through which we become partakers of the divine nature. Each child of humanity is invited to become a child of God, and He will send forth the Spirit of His Son into the heart, crying "Abba, Father."

(2) Community of Fellowship. "Thou art ever with me." The father in the parable longed for the companionship of these two lads. It may be that their mother had passed away, leaving him desolate, and he thought that in their companionship his loneliness would be relieved. The earthly parent longs as much for the abiding fellowship of his children as God does for ours. He goes far, when He says, "Son, give me thine heart," but no words can exaggerate the yearning of infinite love for the close fellowship of those for whom He spared not His own Son.

(3) Community off Possession. "All that I have is thine." We are called to be sons; and if sons, "then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." It is incredible, but it is true! Just now we are in our minority, and are not entrusted with our full property. We are under stewards and guardians until the time appointed by our Father; but it is certain that we are not bond-servants, but sons, and if sons, then heirs of God. All things are ours, whether life or death, things present or things to come, and, best of all, the unsearchable riches of Christ.

But, as in the parable, so with men and women still; the receiving apparatus may be out of gear or out of touch, and God's ideals are lost to us. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thee, as a hen gathers her chickens beneath her wing, but ye would not!"

The prodigal was out of tune with the father's heart because of sensual passion; the elder brother, because of his pride; and it will be impossible for us to enter into God's ideals, so long as we permit the intrusion of self in either of these directions.

If, therefore, we sincerely desire to be absolutely attuned to the nature of God, we must love. "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him." Only thus shall we know and appreciate the love that God has to us. There is no alternative; but as Tennyson puts it: Love must take up the harp of life and strike on all its chords with might, until the chord of self shall be silenced and pass from sight.

The tenderest sounding of the chord of Deity was at Calvary. "Herein was manifested the love of God towards us, in that Christ died for us." It was not that He interposed between us and an angry God who needed to be appeased; for God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. It was by the Eternal Spirit that Jesus offered Himself. The love of the eternal Godhead, sacrificial, inexhaustible, infinite, is revealed at Calvary, and if we would be attuned to the nature of God, we must not only know and believe it, we must enter into its spirit, and repeat in the tiny miniature of our lives every note of its great chords.

The love of the father in the parable, though it failed with the elder son, succeeded with the younger. The love of the Cross, though it left the one thief repentant, welcomed the other to Paradise. Let us see to it that, in our case, it be not in vain. And at this moment let every one of us take a rapid survey of our lives, and assure ourselves that there is no hatred, animosity, or enmity between us and others, which may be putting us out of touch with the divine nature. There is a sense in which, though we cannot like each other equally, we may be free of all wrath, malice, hatred, and evil speaking.

During a recent Welsh revival this unforgettable incident took place. In a large mining centre the evening meeting was commencing in the crowded chapel an hour before the advertised time. Some were praying, some endeavoring to address the rest, and many were singing or reciting texts of Scripture. To the superficial observer it might have seemed that all those conditions favorable to a revival were present. But in the midst of the excitement Evan Roberts entered, passed to the chair in the pulpit, and knelt for a time in silent prayer. Thus his sensitive nature soon became aware that the meeting was stirred more by excitement than by the breath of the Spirit of God. So he rose and silenced the hubbub, and for a who
le half-hour the great congregation remained hushed and still in the searching light of the Holy Spirit. At the end of that period of self-examination, which anticipated the judgment-seat of Christ, one of the best-known mine-owners in the town rose from his seat and extended his hand to another mine-owner, and the two men, professing Christians, who had been at feud for years, were reconciled. Instantly the entire atmosphere of the meeting was changed. The keynote now was Calvary; the power was that of Pentecost. Scores were born again into the Kingdom of God, and all bare witness to the overshadowing presence of Christ. That meeting was keyoted to the love of God. Like one vast choir, the people sang a new song; and to those two men there must have flowed, in a tumultuous tide, the blessed consciousness of God's nearness and love.

If, therefore, to-day you have brought your gift to the altar—it may be a desire for a fresh consecration; for a closer walk with God; for more quickened awareness of the love and grace of God— and if the Holy Spirit reminds you of some man or woman who has aught against you, the offering must be postponed till after you are reconciled. Then you may return to offer it. The fire will not have died down; the Great High Priest will not have grown weary in waiting. If you do not love your brother whom you have seen, you cannot be in touch with God whom you have not seen. There is no alternative!

Here we must distinguish between love and the emotion of love; between love and like. We cannot like every one, but we can love every one, because love in its initial stages is the product of the will and choice of doing and acting, not of feeling. When (Mark 12:28) the scribe asked our Lord to define the chief commandment, Jesus replied: “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength, and your neighbor as yourself.” Man y of us, mistakenly, try to love our enemy with our heart, and find our task impossible. Whereas if we begin with the strength, i.e., the will and the outward act—not because it is easy, but because it is right—we shall discover that the strength will lead to the kindly thought of the mind, and that to the soul with its moral intuitions, and that in turn to the heart. Make the advance; write the letter; confess the wrong; offer your apology; restore what has been dishonestly taken; repay the debt; rather endure loss than keep the wound open; and you will find yourself in immediate harmony with God's nature. In the words of Christ, “You will be children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh his sun to shine on the evil, and sendeth rain on the unjust.”

When we choose that position, and in the power of the Spirit take the first steps along this path, heaven is opened above us. The concentric circles of Divine Love are recognized, welcomed, and received. We march to the music of reality. When we need comfort, or power to intercede, or the saving help of God’s right hand, or the victory that overcomes the world, or the consciousness of a love that will never let us go, we shall be able to receive them, as the transmitter releases its message to the receiver. Like Noah, we shall hear the tapping of the dove at the window of the heart, and shall find in its mouth the first green leaf of those new heavens and that new earth which will abide for ever.

There is a scientific phrase in common use, which is coincident with the spirit of this chapter. The late Professor Henry D rummond gave it a wide vogue in his famous book on Natural Law in the Spiritual World. It is the law of correspondence with our environment. Directly an organism falls out of that correspondence it dies. When it has only a partial correspondence it enfeebles and anemizes. Only when the correspondence is perfect is vigorous health possible; but when that is established doors are opened on every side into the treasure-stores of the universe.

The environment, which is our native habitat, is the love of God. God is; God is everywhere; God is everywhere and unchanging, and God is love. In Him we are meant to live and move and have our being. If we are proud, selfish, and unforgiving, we are out of correspondence with our divine environment, and become anemic and unhealthy. We are as unable to enjoy life or to explore its possibilities as a sick child to gather the treasures of the spring woods and meadows. Love, which forgives and forgets, which knows no jealousy, harbors no ill-will, cherishes no grudge, and meets the sharp edge of unkindness with gentle forbearance, should be our response to God’s environing presence. Then the mountains will bring peace, and the little hills His righteousness; then mines of diamonds will open under our feet, and the river-sands shall yield gold.

It was the habit of the late C. H. Spurgeon, when about to speak in a vast auditorium, to listen attentively till, either through the orchestra or some previous speaker, he could detect the chord of the place; because every building has its special chord, and to speak in harmony with it is to be able to fill it without strain either to speaker or audience. Now the one chord which is sounding through the universe is the love of God. Its cadence is the music of the spheres. It is the keynote to which every harp touched by angel-hands is attuned. Its notes are wafted down amid the jangling discords Of this sin-stricken earth, and are heard by the few who have learned to listen. When we cherish unkind and jealous thoughts, we are unable to symphonize with it or to hear it. We are at discord with holy beings everywhere. We are out of step with the onward march of the saints. We shut ourselves off from the Divine Transmitter; and there settles down upon us only the sultry glare and unutterable loneliness of the desert. Therefore, little children, let us love, for love is of God, and they who...
o abide in love abide in God; for God is love.

F.B. Meyer