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*Behold the
Substance*

GENEVIEVE BURNELL

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Lecture Number

Merry Christmas

in the series

Procession of Doctrine

from
by

GENEVIEVE BURNELL

Mr. and Mrs. R. E. Bishop

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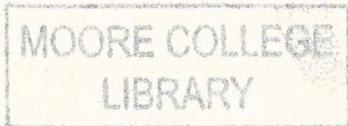
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* Behold the Substance

The miracle of revelation in the Liturgy for today is nominated as the Transfiguration of the Son of Man.

Let us note the expression "Transfiguration of the Son of Man." Jesus called Himself "The Son of Man." Note that this event is not referred to as "The Transfiguration of the Son of God."

But because the Son of Man and the Son of God are One, we have manifest the Son of God at the same identical point where we look upon the Son of Man. Through transfiguration, the Son of God is revealed in the figure of the Son of Man. This miracle is the Transfiguration.

The miracle of revelation was foreshadowed by Peter when he said to Jesus, Thou art the Christ, the Son of God. When Peter said this, his eyes saw only Jesus standing there; yet with an ecstasy of heart within, he was enabled to transcend the human form and penetrate to

*(Class lecture, March 7, 1957)

the very ground of Being itself. "Thou art the Christ," he said from his heart; although his eyes saw there only the figure of the Son of Man.

The significance of the Transfiguration and its secret is the hypostatic union of God and Man. The inseparable identification of the Son of Man and the Son of God is revealed through transfiguration.

Recently we had as our subject of study, the overcoming of temptation—temptation successfully met and dealt with by the Son of Man because He carried with Him at all times that supreme consciousness of Who and What He was. He had not—as Saint James explains that men so often do—looked into the mirror of existence and forgotten what manner of man He was. At every point, even in human existence, He was fully conscious of Himself as the Essence, the living Supreme.

And what is the essence of all existence? God of Very God.

In this revelation called The Transfiguration,

your attention today is especially directed to certain fundamental facts, one of which is that our Lord was in no degree indulging in the spectacular. He had already overcome this temptation. Is it not the greatest temptation of all to men who know their worth, to exploit the advantage this knowledge gives them?

Here was One fully aware of His true Self, Who remained meek and humble of heart on all occasions. The great temptation of the spectacular was met by the Son of Man because He knew with true authority that He was eternally the Son of God. Temptation only exists within the realm of possibility, for there is no temptation without possibility. In every situation He had the possibility of revealing divine power and showing everyone that He was indeed the Son of God. Yet, never at any time did He exploit this knowledge. His true authority of being overcame such temptation to the spectacular. Fully aware of Himself, He did not need to show this to others to establish conviction within or without.

Yet, now we see Him transfigured! Has He succumbed to a temptation in showing forth through this miraculous event His supreme Being? This ecstatic event of the Transfiguration seems spectacular, does it not? Has He succumbed to the temptation of showing what manner of Man-God He is? Let us not fall into such a pit of delusion. He gives this revelation of what manner of man He is, not for Himself, but for us. He did not have to show Who He was to Himself. But with wondrous compassion of His heart, He gave us this revelation, that He might strengthen us in our temptation—our temptation to lose faith because of circumstantial evidence.

Plenty of evidence against His divinity was piling up in His human pathway. He knew the trials ahead for His disciples, present and future; in fact for all those who accept Him as their stronghold. What trials abound, what terrible test of faith confronts every disciple of truth.

Do you think that you are immune from such

temptation, from such trials to your faith? No one is immune from the trial, but all who are truly His disciples are immune from succumbing to these temptations. As you are His disciple, you are strengthened in Him Who is your real strength. Yet, left simply to yourself and the structure of your own mentality, your faith would be as weak as water.

A terrible test of faith was ahead for His disciples. Not only for them, but for every one who walks where Jesus walked—the human path in the realm of experience. The test of faith is on every side, manifest in every event and under all conditions of existence. You are quite familiar with these many pitfalls.

You are a rational human being, yet the very structural element of your rationality tears against itself in constant conflict. The things you see, the things you are confronted with, are in constant conflict with the basic nature of your reason. Sense evidence and reason—these two elements in the structural system of human mentality, set up such conflicting tes-

timony that the result seems virtually self-destructive. Yet actually they are not destructive but constructive because there is something in the Being of man, the very ground of Being Itself, which protects man against the ravages of structural opposites. The solution is not in the element of opposition, but in the transcending point of Being which reveals the transfiguration of structure.

Elements of man's structural rational system can not be really opposed. They may seem to be opposed on the surface, but they are not fundamentally contradictory. Even as in the movement of a pendulum, there is no real contradiction in the directions of the swing. So we may swing toward reason, or we may swing toward circumstantial evidence; but in the fundamental and basic structure of our intellect, reasoning and sense evidence can harmonize through faith. The conflict, the opposition, which seems like discord between these two elements of our structural system, are really the running operation of our organ of thought.

The whole system moves and functions smoothly when faith has unified the within and without.

*Keep faith with reason
and she'll transfigure thee.

Today we are speaking about Transfiguration. Our divine Pattern shows the Son of Man, without breaking down the human structural system, without eliminating anything pertaining to the integrity of nature, being glorified by revealing the divine perfection which is an eternal reality. The Transfiguration of the Son of Man is your transfiguration when you keep faith with reason.

What is this action of transfiguration? What does it consist of? Technically it is the complete transparency of nature to the ground of Absolute Being. Consider the word itself "transfiguration." The natural form or figure is visible; but the Essence, or Being, shines out from within. The glory is not a reflected light

*AXIOMS, Book of Health, by George Edwin Burnell, page 7

thrown on from the outside. The illumination is the light of Being Itself that comes from within and shines forth without destroying form. The inner light is revealing; at the point of finite form the ground of infinite Being is disclosed. In existence is revealed essence. Substance is seen in the image. God is the meaning of life.

The name "God" simply means that of which none greater can be thought. One cannot actually define God; by giving Him a name, no one can put a handle on Him. If you could, He would not be infinite. So, when we use the term "God," we mean, "That which is greater than can be thought;" greater than our minds can conceive, that which is beyond all form or pattern of thought, beyond the conception of mind; an intelligence greater than thought, which illumines mind without destroying it. Your thought, your reason, your faith, cannot form pictures of the Infinite, for essence is greater than a mental structure. But when your mental structure is transfigured by divine In-

telligence, the revelation glorifies the whole meaning of existence. Your life becomes a complete transparency to the ground of Essential Being.

Our Lord is the bearer of this supreme revelation; in Him do we see God manifest. To our structure of human thought this seems an impossibility, yet it is not impossible to Him Who is Jesus the Christ; for Christ as Jesus is the Son of Man, and Jesus as The Christ is the Son of God, without separation, consciously united. The Transfiguration performs the miracle by keeping faith with reason.

God is the ground of your being. You could not exist without Him; He is the authority of your only existence. You may have forgotten this, so you try to remind yourself through rationality, or by means of faith, of what manner of man you really are; but, try as you may, the perception is slippery and theoretical. The sense evidence for your being seems more authoritative than faith in Absolute Being. You constantly try to back faith with sense evidence,

but your reason and faith fail to identify. You reason the truth of your being, that if you exist at all you must be Truth; but your faith, when put to the test of experience, weakens and fails. Reason tells us that Truth is unchangeable and indivisible, and the senses show us division and changes; but faith transfigures perception by enabling us to see one thing and believe another.

Let your light shine from within, illuminating experience that contradictions may vanish. The test of faith in experience is to know truth, in spite of contradiction, with such rationality that even stumbling blocks become guiding steps.

Our Lord recognized that appearances would soon scandalize His disciples, and that circumstantial evidence of Him would be their stumbling block. Not Truth, but expectation about truth, trips up the human mind. He warned the disciples that they would be scandalized in Him that very night, for they had no place in expectations, for a cross. He was

well aware that the event of His Cross was to be their stumbling block. To help them transcend this block, He is now giving them, at this very point, a transfiguration. When stumbling blocks are transfigured into stepping stones, experience itself is clarified.

Have you the ecstasy within corresponding to the experience of a miracle? Without the correlation of inner ecstasy there is no miracle, and there is no miracle unless there is a corresponding ecstasy. The unity of perception, ecstasy and miracle, is the Transfiguration. Be not dependent upon outside conditions, but let the inner structure of your constitutional mind be so full of ecstasy that it shines through the patterns of thought, illuminating everything. In this transfiguration of your life, God Himself speaks His authoritative announcement: This is My beloved Son. Complete transparency of form to Ground of Being is the miracle of transfiguration. The Son of Man and the Son of God are One. The visible and the invisible are the miracle of the one substance.

The favored disciples, Peter, James, and John, were exposed to the miracle of this vision of revelation; and their corresponding ecstasy enabled them to acknowledge this supreme event. They saw the Ground of Being through the transparency of human form without destroying the visible form; instead, preserving and maintaining full physical integrity. Essence is no longer obscure, but is revealed right through and in the form of existence; the invisible God, revealed through and in the visible Son of Man! This wonderous revelation is the fulfillment of all revelation. When this becomes your ecstasy, you have found the true miracle in everything.

Peter—the impetuous Peter—wanted to fasten down this miraculous ecstasy right where he experienced it. He wanted to erect a temple on the spot. How very human Peter was, to try to materialize what he found good. Pin ecstasy down! Materialize your revelations! How lifeless can such an act be, like a butterfly pinned

to a display card! Even Peter was heedless of the vital nature of this trinity of the revelation.

What is this Ground of Being which transfigures all existence? First of all, we may refer to it as God—that of which none greater can be thought—beyond all categories of thought, beyond all power of mental picturing; Absolute Being.

Second, it is mystically called “The Abyss,” meaning that it is inexhaustible, ineffable, the profound depth of Being Itself. Mystery is implied in the term “abyss,” but that we do not fall into the delusion that it is something vague, abstract, and without form, we use the philosophical term “Logos.” Always there must be the logical form preserved and maintained—never destroyed. This is true mystery.

Then, third, it is spoken of religiously as the “Spirit.” Spirit is all pervading and expresses true meaning. Transfiguration, then, is a trinity of revelations: Absolute Being, God, complete Presence as the depth of Being; Abyss, the ineffable light of mystery; the Spirit which

you cannot classify materially, nor define mentally—the Divine Mystery.

How wonderful it is that the Supreme is a mystery! If you could ever catalogue God within your mind and define Him—form a mental picture of Him within your organ of thought—He would cease to be the Absolute. The incomprehensible must always be a spiritual mystery; the abysmal depth of all Being must ever be pure mystery. Yet it is greater mystery still which retains that form of the Logos, thus preserving ever the logical form of reason. Faith does not destroy reason; it strengthens and enlightens it and removes all limitations of reason. Let us keep faith with reason that the Spirit may transfigure us.

We are transfigured by a trinity of revelation. One without the other would limit revelation. Too much mystery—merely the element of faith without the rational form—makes for gullibility. Too much rationality, without Spirit and its element of faith, degenerates into rationalism. Without the Spirit, revelation tends to

materiality, even as Peter wanted to build a material temple to his revelation. His ecstasy made him know that it was good to be there, but he wanted to build on the peak of his ecstasy. He desired to materialize the vision into something concrete.

Faith does not destroy your rational constitution; rather, it is perfected by a transparency which lets the Ground of Being shine through. The structure of your rational constitution receives illumination, and here are three words which describe the mental aspects to be enlightened: “autonomy,” “heteronomy,” and “theonomy,” the threefold structure of your rational nature. Let us consider each in turn.

Autonomy. This is basic rationality that belongs to the very structure of your system as a person who is an individual substance of a rational nature. You may speak of this, if you like, as your “constitutional mind.” Basically, you are a rational human being; although perhaps you are unfamiliar with the depth and power of your rational equipment. Only when

you are properly tapped by intelligent questions, do you become aware of all you did not know you knew, but which belongs to the very constitution of your intellectual system. Autonomy is, basically, reasoning.

Heteronomy may be distinguished from autonomy, as an influence which seems to come from outside. Of course, really, nothing is entirely outside; but it appears to the mind to be an outside influence. This is experienced as observation, environmental situations, and knowledge acquired through the senses. Past experiences influence present judgements. We are apt to interpret today's events by the light of yesterday's mistakes. Circumstantial evidence seems to be forever modifying our basic rationality. The mind, like a pendulum, swings from autonomy, or reason, to heteronomy, the influences of circumstantial or sense evidence. This happens even in matters of faith. The human mind becomes confused, swinging back and forth from rational principles to appearances. These two aspects of mind act against

each other and result in what we experience as our trials and conflicts.

The disciples, being human, as we are, also were thrown into similar conflicts and struggles. Basically they had confidence and faith in Jesus, their Master; but the situations of the Crucifixion scandalized them. It takes real courage to stand faithful to a principle in the midst of scandalous situations which seem to contradict the very principles of truth.

What is it that delivers man from these struggles of mind and heart? Where can one find peace when inner conflicts rage? Rationality seems abstract, and the conflict in faith seems unanswerable. This would be the case if it were not for the third point, theonomy. Without theonomy, man's plight would indeed be terrible. Actually, autonomy and heteronomy must look to the third, theonomy, for the transfiguring Ground of Being. Without theonomy, autonomy and heteronomy would be self-destructive. It takes theonomy to transfigure the structure of your physical system.

The Transfiguration delivers you. It gives you the courage of your faith and enables you to stand in the presence of truth in spite of every sense observation which may seem to scandalize. These three points of constitutional structure need their proper order, that the light of intelligence may shine out from the Ground of Being to illumine. The forms and rituals, even the accidents of life, need not be eliminated when they are converted from stumbling blocks to stepping stones. Keeping faith with reason transfigures your whole life. The transfiguration takes place right at the very point where you had seemed scandalized and frustrated. The light of truth shines out from within from the mystery of the great abyss, giving light to the environment and enabling you to live with yourself and your world in the glory of truth.

Theonomy must be at the Ground of Being to autonomy and heteronomy—it must be the unity of the within and the without, basic reason and sense evidence. Theonomy is far

more than a divine law imposed upon your constitutional mind; it is Divine Law within you as the authority and ground of your true Being. It is the essence of life which shines forth in existence without destroying the form or the logic of living. Reason and faith—both are glorified, illumined, and perfected in the authority of Divine Being.

Axiomatic reasoning presents the basic principles constituted to receive faith. The form of logic remains, but faith brings new horizons by expanding and deifying. Faith and reason are transfigured by the light of divine authority. Remember to keep faith with reason, and she will transfigure you. If you keep faith with reason, you will be transfigured—not because reason becomes deified, nor faith more logical, but because theonomy, the divine light and authority of Being, shines through, transfiguring your life—not destroying your life as a rational human being, but bringing forth, through this very rational form of your existence, the true revelation of what manner of

spiritual person you really are. No longer will you be scandalized in present situations; no longer will there be stumbling blocks barring your pathway; because your life, transfigured, will see all things transfigured. The ecstasy of the miracle within, in which your mind transcends itself and its usual way of thinking, can find the miracle of life and truth wherever you look—not because you have to change the form of living, but because, right where you are now, in the very form in which you stand, there will come an ecstasy of nature which reveals to you Being Itself in the miracle of your own mind.

You can speak of the ecstasy of your mind corresponding with the miracle of nature; or of the miracle of your mind corresponding with the ecstasy of nature. You can speak either way of this transfiguration; but whichever way you say it, it is the same, for the within and the without are the miracle of the one substance.

What is this one substance? It is That-Which-Is, Truth, God, The Abyss, The Logos, The

Spirit, The Same, The One. A range of terminology is necessary because you cannot describe God—that than which none greater can be thought—by any positive or definite concrete statement. That-Which-Is cannot be fastened down to this or that.

These various names for That-Which-Is are aspects within your own structural, rational element. The terminology is really not in conflict. It may seem to you to confuse because you are looking from the point of human perception, from the standard of what *seems* to be real, rather than what is really real. But when the One Substance, by whatever name you use, has transfigured you with ecstasy, the miracle of revelation will open your constitutional mind to the *really* real in existence.

The transparency of your life to truth is manifest in the very form in which experience is presented. Change of form is not necessary, only complete transparence of form to the really real. The Ground of Being, or Spirit, Abyss, or Logos, manifests with equal precision.

For the Ground of Being is what is really in everything. It does not mean destroying rational philosophy, nor destroying the precepts of faith; nor does it mean destroying religious perceptions. It means revealing the authority of true Being and the essence of divine life, That-Which-Is, the Really Real. That which seems to be real becomes transparent, that the really real may transfigure existence.

This miracle of revelation amounts to a complete self-sacrifice of this person you *think* is yourself. The person you think you are has to become transparent to your own thinking to be a medium of this revelation. It is not by exalting your ideas of yourself that you reveal truth. The bearer of the revelation reaches transparency only by a complete self-sacrifice of experience that is not truth. Then only may the revelation of truth be manifest. This is not destructive of being; it is the revelation of Being.

Jesus said, "He who believes in Me does not believe in Me." Do you think He is being

contradictory here in His statements? He was presenting a transparency to revelation. The "Me" that seemed real was transfiguring the really real. And yet the miracle took place in the Me. He made the sacrifice; without destroying the Son of Man, the Son of God transubstantiated the visible Presence.

Do you think you have to destroy your life to make this self sacrifice? There is no offering in a destroyed self. Give up wholly and completely all that you think you are as a person, that you may find yourself as you really are, the Person of the True Being. As your self alone, there is no subsistent revelation; but as you keep faith with reason, That-Which-Is shines through, giving the subsistence of authority to even the individual forms of your existence. God is manifest in the visible, the Abyss reveals the fullness of human existence, the Logos gives the glory to faith, and all within and without expresses God.

This is the miracle of the Transfiguration. Let it take place in you, not by making changes,

but by being only the One which Is, God, Spirit,
Logos, revealed in the Son of Man.

Look down, O Lord, we beseech Thee,
on this the sacrifice
of ourselves as ourselves,
that we may find increased within us
the revelation of our True Self;
and that our devotion to this truth,
within and without,
may obtain for us the transfiguration,
right where we are,
of our salvation.

Grant, we humbly beseech Thee,
O Almighty God,
that those whom Thou hast refreshed
with Thy divine meditation,
may worthily receive Thee
in the conduct of their lives.

O God, Who seest how destitute
we are in ourselves,
give us Thy strength

and preserve us, both within and without,
that our bodies may find that perfection
of transfiguration
even in what seems to be experiences
which scandalize and which we call
adversities,
that the perfection and the purity
of our being may shine through,
transfiguring life by the Divine Life.

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