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This Psychic Age

by T. Austin-Sparks

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The feature of intensification is inherent in all realms; the physical, the metaphysical, and the spiritual. In nature, harvest is the intensification of a process. The end is but the full outworking or development of what was inherent in the beginning. We are living in an age when, in every realm, this process has reached an enormous proportion. It is not new potentialities. All that we are now seeing is but the discovery of what has been present all the time. Atomic energy, for instance, is not something newly created in the twentieth century. It has been in the constitution of things from the beginning; it has only been discovered and appropriated in this century.

The same is true in every other connection. Sin is no new thing, it is in the nature of man. If sin has become intensely more pronounced and more widely and wickedly expressed, it is but the full development of what was 'original'.

We are living in a time when the psychic element in this universe and in creation is manifesting itself in colossal proportions. If 'psychic' means soul; and if soul means mind (reason), feeling (emotion), and will (volition), then it can be seen that soul is developed to a degree that dominates this world in every realm. It is true that this wheel sometimes develops a bulge at one of its three sections, or even two, and the wheel becomes unbalanced. Emotion and will may become out of proportion. Sometimes reason takes control and predominates. But when we have said all that can be said on this matter, let us hasten to add that all this is but the human ego.

It is what the New Testament calls "the natural man". Translators have so worded it because it would sound strange to translate literally and say 'the soul', or 'the soulical man'. This may be a simplification resort, but it may also gloss over a very serious matter. The gloss may be to weaken and conceal the contextual contrast between this species and category of humanity and "he that is spiritual", or 'the man of spirit'.

This difference of categories and 'species' is traceable back to the very beginning of human life. If "God is Spirit" as Jesus affirmed; and if only spirit can communicate with Him, and He with spirit, as Jesus also declared (John 4:23,24), and it is true that God walked and talked with man before he offended and separated himself from God, it is not only the solid implication of the whole of Scripture but the clear teaching of the Word of God and of history that the injury and separation took place in what man was then, that is, in the realm of his spirit. He must have previously been preeminently a man of spirit, by which all his communications with and government by God proceeded. If the spirit was violated, or man as a man of spirit was changed, then man became a changed order of being, and that was, a man of soul, with his spirit closed to God. The Bible calls it "separated from God". Therefore he became a soul-and-body man or species, with his spirit nullified in its true functions.

So man, in the 'Fall', fell out of his true union with God into himself, his *ego*, and thenceforth was a man wholly of natural mind, feelings, and decisions and volition. This nature and consequence can be seen quite clearly in the fact that, in order to interrupt the true normal relationship with God for all Divine purposes and interests, Satan made his attack at the point of the soul: firstly, reason - "Hath God said?"; then, feeling - "it is pleasant". Then the will followed reason and emotion which were put into the act, the choice and deed. This changed the order of man's nature, and, as we have said, made of him another kind than God made him.

This, then, was the beginning; man became preeminently a soulish, psychic creature. The process has gone on with ever-increasing strength and range. The whole commercial world is built upon this nature. Every advertisement contains the three features - reason why; an appeal to the advantage; and the capture of the act. But in every other realm a Satan-inspired and energized soul-force is his method of controlling his captured kingdom.

In our times the principle of 'dictatorship' has reached abnormal proportions. We have seen men of almost uncontrolled soul-force sweep nations into the vortex of unspeakable destruction and carnage. We are seeing a swift and unrestrained movement towards 'Antichrist', that is, the 'super man', the man or system of psychic powers which simulate the miraculous and the supernatural. The Bible tells us all about this. But for this present we have two things in mind; this development as an intensification of what came in through Satan at the beginning gives very strong evidence of the hastening harvest when the sickle will be plunged into the field of this humanity and it will be cut down. Intensification in any realm is always a warning. Abnormality is always a symptom that there is danger in the body corporate.

But our special emphasis is on the need to note that there is, and will be, an increasing invasion of this soulical, psychical character into the realm of 'Christianity'. We have seen this especially in the past century in the matter of reason or rationalism. The enthronement of 'liberalism', rationalism, and human judgment in the things of God has done an immeasurable amount of damage to the true life in the Spirit, and has almost entirely set aside the supernatural, especially in the matter of new birth; which, of course, is the new birth of the spirit of man.

In the work of God too often an autocratic and abnormally strong human control has been asserted; bringing everything and everybody under a domineering and legalistic mastery. But we are seeing an immense amount of the appeal to soul along its emotional line, with much imitation of the supernatural. All this is leading, as the Devil would have it, to confusion in the things of God, and to no small amount of discredit to the Lord. It all ministers to suspicion and fear. Anything that is abnormal, the pushing of things to an extreme, is to be suspect and feared. It is in this way that the great deceiver and subverter discredits the truth and brings dishonour to the Lord's name.

Sooner or later this abnormal asserting of the soul-force will bring its own nemesis of judgment, as we have seen both in Bible history and in recent times in the case of 'dictators'. Our mental institutions tell a sorry tale in this matter, and there are all too many who, having so projected *themselves*, their *ego*, into Divine things, are mental, nervous, and spiritual wrecks. This is possible in all human personality.

Saul of Tarsus could have been a very real case in point, for he had such force and strength of soul naturally. The Lord's precautions for him were brokenness: "...lest I should be exalted above measure". The Lord saw to it that there was plenty of ballast in Paul's life to keep him balanced and moving only by dependence upon God.

Brokenness is a great safeguard against ourselves and the Devil. The Lord never ministers to our self-sufficiency, and certainly never does anything to inflate us. Rather is it the other way. Christ is the offset to Antichrist; and that means that Christ must become our only strength, wisdom, and understanding.

We have dealt with this whole matter in much greater fullness in our book [What is Man?](#), but there is a place and need for this supplementary word.

Let him that reads take note.