

A MEDITATION*

Lord, it is for your sake that we are meeting here, to increase our understanding of your Word; so we begin this first day of our conference by turning to you and praying for your blessing on our efforts and our good intentions.

Once you were lost sight of among the scholars in the Temple,¹ and it might well happen that you were equally lost sight of here among scholars paying more attention to their disputes than to your Word. Lord, change us so profoundly that we are not wretched intellectuals, trapped in philology and imprisoned by theology. Lord, change us so profoundly that our eyes have you always before them and our wills are fused with yours, so that our thinking may keep close to your truth.

That time in the Temple, it was you who listened and asked questions. Here, Lord, we ask you to reverse the roles. It is our turn to listen to you and ask you questions, and you are to speak and teach us. Each of us prays to you the prayer of little Samuel, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'²

Lord, you once said: 'I tell you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will never enter it'³ – and we are sometimes tempted, like modern Nicodemuses, to think that at our age, with our learning, we can hardly now read your Gospel like little children, and so we are in danger of deserving your indignation.⁴ Lord, prevent us from giving way to this temptation and make us always ready to listen to your teaching and your calls to service.

For you call us all, Lord, to work towards your reign; or rather, you yourself choose to make your reign a reality through the activity of poor creatures like us. We thank you, Lord, for having chosen us for this glorious task, the bringing in of your reign and the building of your kingdom. We pray you earnestly to reign in us and to take such firm possession of our heart, that is, of our intellect and will, that we may truly become good builders of your sovereignty and your kingdom.

What we are asking now, Lord, is really what you yourself taught us to ask in the Lord's Prayer. As we begin this day and this conference it is your own prayer that we are saying to you all together, united in a deep spirit of brotherhood. But this prayer must not be merely a momentary *act* in our life. It must touch us so deeply that it keeps us in a continual *state* of prayer, so that it is fulfilled in every moment of our day.

Our Father . . .

And now, Lord, grant that all this day may be devoted to your glory and to your sovereignty, as we try to carry out your will like good sons and daughters, and like willing pupils to listen to your Word. AMEN.

NOTES

1. Luke 2:42-50.
2. I Sam. 3:9.
3. Mark 10:15.
4. Here quote Luke 11:52.

JEAN CARMIGNAC, Paris

* This meditation was used by a distinguished French scholar at the first morning Session of the 1973 International Conference of New Testament Scholars (S.N.T.S.). The simple English of this translation by Mrs. K. M. Moir, Edinburgh, is an attempt to recapture the simple beauty of the original in the belief that it merits wider pondering and may be adaptable to other circumstances. We are most grateful to Père Carmignac for allowing his MS. to be used and for agreeing to its being translated.—Ed.