

A Special Vocation

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon explores the idea that the Lord's people are divided into three realms: the general mass, the Levite realm, and the realm of Moses and Aaron as prophet and priest, highlighting the importance of spiritual growth and maturity in moving from an objective understanding of Christ's work to a more inward and experimental knowledge of Him.

Scripture: Exodus 32:26, Malachi 2:7, Matthew 10:39, Luke 9:62, John 6:54, Romans 8:2, Romans 12:1, Hebrews 4:12-13, 1 Peter 2:5, 1 Peter 2:9

Topics: "The Role of the Holy Spirit", "Spiritual Maturity"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the special vocation of God's people, illustrating the distinctions within the community of faith through the example of Israel's structure around the tabernacle. He explains that while all believers share in the benefits of Christ's sacrifice, there exists a deeper, more subjective experience of faith that characterizes a smaller group, akin to the Levites in Israel. This inward experience is marked by a personal relationship with God, facilitated by the Cross, the Blood, and the Spirit, which leads to spiritual maturity and effective ministry. Sparks warns against the dangers of merely objective faith, urging believers to seek a transformative relationship with Christ that goes beyond surface-level understanding. Ultimately, he calls for a deeper commitment to spiritual growth and the active work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers.

Transcript

"Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ... But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:5,9).

The Lord's People Divided Into Three Realms

At the beginning of the nationally constituted life of Israel, after they had come out of Egypt and crossed the Red Sea and arrived at Sinai, and the Lord had given instructions concerning the tabernacle and all its materials and its order, and the people were now gathered around the completed tabernacle which had been set up, we find that they were divided into three main realms.

There was, on the circumference, shall we say, the main body of Israel; it was a very large body. We will call them the general company of the people of God.

Then, within them, as a kind of 'Israel within Israel', as it has been expressed, we have the tribe of Levi. For the purposes of the service and the journeys of the people and the tabernacle they are subsequently divided into three, the three families of the sons of Aaron. Their respective functions and ministry were, briefly: (1) the charge and care of the holy vessels - that went to one section of the priestly family; (2) the charge and care of the boards and the bars of the tabernacle, committed to another definite section of the priestly family; and (3) the curtains, the fabric, and all that had to do with the coverings, committed to the third section. Later a fourth function was entrusted to the Levites, namely, the teaching ministry. This was their scope. But there were also limitations imposed upon them. For instance, they were not allowed to slay the offerings, and they were not allowed to offer incense. These things belonged to the priests.

Then, within this second realm, we find at the heart and centre of things Moses and Aaron: Moses, who is the prophet, that is, the one who receives the mind of God for His people; Aaron, the priest, whose function it is to deal with all that has to do with the presence of God in the midst of His people, and with man's approach to God, as present.

That, very briefly, as Bible students know, is a very, very condensed outline, covering an immense amount of detail. But it is sufficient for our present purpose.

Let us now consider the meaning of these three realms of the people of God. We shall actually confine ourselves mainly to the two outer realms, not thinking specially of Moses and Aaron just now, for we need very little further instruction about them. We all know of what we might term the dual value of the ministry of the Lord Jesus, as God's Prophet and High Priest: as the One in whom is revealed all the mind of God for His people, and by whom all the ground is provided for the presence of God in the midst of His people, and all the means available for the approach of God's people to Him. We are not going to dwell upon that just at present. It is the other two that concern us - the general and the more inward.

Divisions in the Old Testament Official

Now, in the Old Testament, the differences and the divisions which we have mentioned were official, they were 'ecclesiastical', they were formal. We see that clearly set forth in the sharply defined companies or bodies of people in different positions, performing different functions. There is the general mass, and there is the more particular company called the Levites; and they are objectively distinguishable. You can see them. Anybody who has seen a picture or model of the tabernacle in the wilderness, with the tribes arranged, can see quite clearly that here are distinct and definite divisions. That is how it is in the Old Testament: it is something official.

Divisions in the New Testament Spiritual

In the New Testament it is not like that, and I ask you to follow me here very closely, for so much depends upon the real grasp of this fact. In the New Testament the same differences are seen, but they are not official, formal, or ecclesiastical. They are spiritual. You can see them, but you can only see them in a spiritual way, for they are only present spiritually. One great danger, with which many other perils are connected, is that of recognizing distinctions and differences on a basis other than a spiritual one. The whole system of Christianity has gone astray on this very point, with disastrous consequences, and there is no end to it. Even amongst quite spiritual and evangelical people there is a very great deal of this Old

Testament mentality, and in so far as that is true, it is loss, it is confusion - it means limitation in almost every spiritual direction. I do want you to grasp this, that the distinctions which are made in the Old Testament are present also in the New Testament, but in an altogether different realm. Here they are spiritual, whereas there they are temporal. Let us then examine these distinctions, keeping in mind the governing law that they are essentially, fundamentally, predominantly, spiritual and not official.

The General Mass of the Lord's People: An Objective Realm

The general mass of the Lord's people - the whole body as represented by all those gathered around the tabernacle to the uttermost bound of the camp - all stood in the value of the high priest's work. By reason of the priestly work of the high priest, they were the Lord's own people. They were in covenant relationship with the Lord, in virtue of shed blood. They were in the good of the presence of the Lord in the midst. All that was true right at the heart of things, with Moses and Aaron, the great altar and the sanctuary, went out to them, reached out to them, embraced them; they were their common property and heritage as the people of God. In that they were no different from other Israelites. There was no difference between them and Levites and priests on that ground. In virtue of the sacrifice and the blood, the atonement and the intercession, this was common ground for all the people of God. They were in the values of the work of the Levites, because the Levites were, after all, as we said previously, only their representatives, and not apart from them.

Now if we apply this up-to-date, we recognize that all who are on the ground of the one great offering, Jesus Christ, on the ground of the precious shed and sprinkled Blood, on the ground of the great atonement made, on the ground of the Holy Spirit as given, on the ground of the High Priestly intercession of the greater than Aaron - all who are on that ground inherit, enjoy, come into, the common benefits of salvation, and all that that means. Well, we accept that, that we are all one in Christ Jesus, and that there is no difference between us.

But note - that their good, their position and their realm, were matters of what was provided for them outwardly, objectively, and of what they believed to be for them - what they appreciated as being for them, and what they accepted as theirs. It was all something presented to them, of which they had an appreciation, which they believed to be theirs by God's mercy, and which they accepted as God's gift. That is the general or comprehensive realm of the Lord's people.

The Levite Realm

But then you come to the second realm, the Levite realm, and you find a difference. There must, of course, be a difference between the Levites and the general company, otherwise they would not exist. And there are indeed many fundamental differences. Many things obtained in the case of the Levites which were specific and particular. They were there as a separate tribe, different from all the other tribes in respects which we may see later on. They were in another realm.

Now you will faithfully cling to what I said a little while ago, that I am not now, in this dispensation, in this New Testament day, distinguishing officially between these realms: that is, I am not putting some people into one specific category, as a people by themselves, and calling them the general mass, and other people into another category, and saying they belong to another order of Christians. Underline that as many times as you like, because there is a good deal of misapprehension and distortion about what we teach on this very thing. We are not talking about Christians in general, on the one hand, and then of an inclusive company of a different order altogether, on the other. We are talking about spiritual realms, not

personal. But here, in both Testaments, whether it is in the Old as temporal, or in the New as spiritual, there is a distinction discernible, and the distinction is marked by certain basic things.

Subjective Experience

First of all, the Levites were those who personally saw and handled and tasted and knew of those things which were available to all the Lord's people - which the Lord's people in general had as their own inheritance, but were only enjoying objectively, and therefore in a very limited way. The Levites were those who had come into all that more inwardly, more experimentally, and it was just that, was it not, that was the point at which they were distinguished. In Exodus 32 they were distinguished by the fact that the object and purpose for which Israel as a whole was called and meant to exist had entered into them in a deep way. We can only speak, of course, in type, but the type contains the spiritual principle. The difference here between the great mass and this 'Israel within Israel' is that the one, the great bulk, were standing in the good of what was objective, and the others were standing in the experience of that made subjective; and that is a very great difference.

We can be the Lord's people; we can know the values of the High Priestly work of the Lord Jesus; we can know what He means as our Prophet, as having brought to us the revelation of God's mind for man: that, and all these other things, may be our inheritance as Christians. But they may yet, while of unspeakable value - and never for one moment let their importance be minimised - they may yet be but objective things that leave our inner life still wanting, still lacking in many respects. I have no hesitation in affirming, though I may expose myself to much misunderstanding, that that is a distinguishing mark amongst the Lord's people today: many standing in the objective good of all that Christ has done, knowing themselves to be the Lord's, and rejoicing in it, but amongst them comparatively few in whom all that has become a powerful, working reality, so that it is in their very being.

The second thing about the Levites is that, because of this realm in which they are found, of the inwardness of things as extra to the objective nature of things, they are in a position to minister to all the others. They are in a place of positive ministry, in the sense that they have a living, fuller and more inward understanding of Christ. That is the basis of ministry. It is the ministry of Israel that is bound up with these people. Now, in our systematized Christianity, we have made ministers into a class; we distinguish them from the 'laity' as the 'clergy' - the ministry and the laity; and these are classes, official, ecclesiastical classes - an utterly false apprehension of Divine truth. Ministry is not based upon anything of that kind at all - upon anything that is external. Ministry is based upon an inward knowledge of the Lord, and no one has a right to enter into any kind of ministry - much less take upon them the title of 'minister' - except in so far as they have a personal, inward, powerful knowledge of the Lord. The other is merely formal and ecclesiastical. Ministry is not official or hierarchical, but spiritual. It is a matter of spiritual measure, and spiritual measure is just the measure of Christ within. Christ is our measure. There is no other measure with God but Christ, and we can only minister according to our inward measure of Christ.

You see the difference, then, between these two great realms. I am not saying that one is the Lord's people and the others are not, I am saying that there are many dear, saved, believing children of God, who know that their eternal hope rests upon Christ's shed Blood, His atoning work, His redeeming activity, and who rest upon His continuous, High Priestly intercession, but with whom you cannot enjoy any deep spiritual fellowship in the things of the Lord. If you try to do so, they do not know what you are talking about; you are talking another language. With them everything is objective, as it was with the main mass of the Israelites. Everything was brought to them as a congregation, ready-made; they were told what they

should do by others, and they did as they were told. They just conformed, because that was the thing that was done in Israel, it was the thing that was believed in Israel. 'God has made known this as His will for His people, so we do it.' In just the same way, many true children of God would say: 'This is how we are told to behave, this is what we are told to believe. We do as we are told by our ministers and our teachers. We simply conform to the established order of Christian doctrine, of Christian practice. The Church believes this, and so - well, we conform to that and accept it.'

But when you come to the Levites, it was not like that. The thing had entered right into themselves, and they were those who had a first-hand, personal, inward knowledge of the mind of the Lord. They did not get anything secondhand. A vast amount of Christianity today is just secondhand. You are not surprised that the mass of Israel could not stand up to the crucial test which came sooner or later. It is a very, very urgent thing that the Lord's people, the Lord's own dear people, should be able to stand up to the severe, fiery tests and trials which come and are coming; but it will only be as they move from the merely objective realm, important and precious though that is, to the realm where they have the root of the matter in themselves.

The Difference Made by (1) The Cross

We shall perhaps be helped in this matter of the Levites if we go on to ask what it was that made the difference between the objective and the subjective, as we have called them - between that which was accepted, believed, appreciated, obeyed and followed as from without, and that in the other realm which came first-hand from the Divine throne and headquarters. What made the difference, and what makes the difference?

The answer is a large one, with quite a number of aspects. The first answer is the Cross, and I take you back again to Exodus 32, for that chapter is basic to the life and the realm and the ministry of the Levites. You remember what is in the chapter. Moses had been in the mount, had tarried long. The people had lost patience, and had called on Aaron to make them 'gods that should go before them' - 'for as for this Moses which brought us out of Egypt, we know not what has become of him.' And so the calf was made, and they danced around it, and gave it the glory of God. Moses came down, having already been told by the Lord what was happening, came down and verified, saw and heard, challenged Aaron as to this great sin, and then took the calf, ground it to powder, strewed the powder upon the water, made them drink it - the bitterness of their own folly. We always have to do that when we depart from the Lord: we have to drink the consequences. That by the way. Then Moses went off to the gate, stood there and cried, 'Who is on Jehovah's side? Let him come to me!', and all the sons of Levi went over to him. And he said, 'Put every man his sword upon his thigh, and go in and out and slay every man his brother and every man his friend and every man his neighbour', and they did it; and from that time the Lord took the tribe of Levi, and set it aside for the essential service of the tabernacle. That is the story in brief.

Let us come over to the New Testament, to the letter to the Hebrews, chapter 4, to the familiar words in verses 12 and 13: "For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight". What do we find here as the context of those words?

We have seen, in the case of Israel, a people in spiritual weakness and in spiritual immaturity, behaving like irresponsible children. Look at them down there around the calf - just like a lot of irresponsible

children. And here, in the letter to the Hebrews, it is like that. Everything had been done for them, and they had come into the good of that which was provided in the High Priestly work of Christ, which is much spoken of here in the immediate context. They were Christians, that is, they were the Lord's people, but they were in terrible spiritual limitation and weakness and childishness, just as those people were when Moses came down from the mount. 'Gird every man his sword upon his thigh'. "The word of God is... sharper than any two-edged sword".

Let us go on, for what we have at the beginning of chapter 6 of this letter to the Hebrews is all of a piece: "Wherefore let us... press on unto full growth". Now between that and chapter 4 you have chapter 5, verses 12 and 13: "For when by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food. For every one that partaketh of milk is without experience of the word" - "the word of God is... sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit" - "without experience of the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food is for fullgrown men, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil."

'Let us go on to full growth'. On the one side immaturity, spiritual infancy, irresponsibility, and all the marks of childhood. On the other hand, full growth. What is the way out of spiritual childishness and immaturity and feebleness, and all that goes with it - out of that into full growth? We have it in chapter 4, verse 12: the sword of the word - the word of the Cross - dividing between soul and spirit. It is the word of the Cross that makes this cleavage. Spiritual infants live in their souls. And what is the soul? It is just the sum of our senses, our natural senses, our feelings, our natural seeing, our natural judgment; the way we approach, apprehend and react to things naturally, even as Christians.

Now, you see, the Israelites reacted. Moses is away there a long time. 'We wot not what has become of him.' 'We have lost him to our senses, we cannot see him, we cannot hear him, we cannot handle him'; and children must do that. They must see, they must handle, they must have all the evidences and the proofs. That is the mark of a child. He had gone out of their natural realm, and they were living in that. Now, the Levites took the sword and cut and cleft between soul and spirit. Their very action was such an action. "Every man his brother". Do not think for a moment that that meant the hated brother, the disliked brother, the brother to whom you would like to use the sword in any case. It is your brother, your own kith and kin, your blood relationship, your own family, the closest ties. Here is a test as to whether you are going to live in your soul or live in the spirit, whether you are going to move on the basis of your own feelings, sentiments, likes, reasonings, or whether you are going to move with God on principle. There are very, very big spiritual issues bound up with this.

As we said in an earlier message, it was a breaking in of Satan to draw worship away from God to himself, just at the time when the worship of God was being set up and constituted; as though he would say, 'I am taking all that - the very gold of the sanctuary, which is meant for the tabernacle.' Is not that a very, very big thing? Satan is always doing that, seeking to steal God's place and God's rights, even amongst the people of God. Now, the Levites reacted against that. I am not saying that they understood all that was involved, but it is here in principle, and it was a costly thing to their own souls to slay their own brother and their own friend and their own neighbour. The neighbourly man, to do it, was taking the sword to his own soul, was he not? There is no doubt about that.

Yes, the sword divided between soul and spirit then, right enough, and the Cross, you see, is represented by that. The Lord Jesus connected and linked those two things - taking up the Cross, or His Cross, and

denying oneself. "He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. 10:39). This is the work of the Cross. But it was just that that made all the difference between these people, the Levites, and the rest. The Cross brought the Levites into their special position. Today, a deep application of the Cross would slay the self-life, the whole self-life; and God only knows how comprehensive that is, how many-sided and many-pointed that is. But a deep application of the Cross to the very centre of the self-life, the selfhood, for its deposing, that Christ may have that place, is the only way out of immaturity into maturity, out of the objective into the subjective; out of that realm where everything, though precious, is just presented to us and given to us, to the place where it is planted in us and becomes a part of us - and there is a very great difference between the two.

The Cross severs, the Cross divides. The Cross nullifies a whole realm. And spiritual knowledge - "for the priest's lips should keep knowledge" (Mal. 2:7), says the Word - waits on this work of the Cross. Whoso has not known this work of the Cross may regard himself or herself, or may be regarded by others, as an authority in the things of God, but that authority is not resting upon a proper foundation. Authority rests upon this - has it been wrought in you by a mighty, deep, self-destroying work of the Cross? Out of that, and that only, is authority. Take the case of all cases - the Lord Jesus. He spoke with authority. Why? Because, all the while He was speaking, and in all His life, He was utterly self-crucified - crucified to self.

Ministry, too, is consequent upon a work like this. Let me ask any of my readers who are in ministry: How did you take up ministry? If you like to put the article there, How did you take up 'the ministry'? On what ground? Let me tell you something. It has not been an unknown thing for men who have been in what is called 'the ministry', to come to an end of that whole thing, and quit it, because they have discovered that they were in it on a wrong basis. Yes, called ministers, wearing the garb of the minister, on the ministerial list, and all the rest: and yet eventually, by some eye-opening work of God, they have realized that theirs was a false position. They were in it, not on this ground that God had done some terrific thing in their being, shattering the natural life. And out of those ashes there sprang a knowledge of the Lord for His people which is the only qualification for the ministry. If that is not the ground, it is better to quit. Do not be in a false position, under a false interpretation of: "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). With your hand on that plough, you may yet be in a wholly false position. You may have no right or proper basis for having your hand on that plough at all.

Forgive the seriousness and solemnity of this word, and the emphasis, but these are very vital things. Much more could be said. The first answer to the question - What makes the difference? - is the Cross.

The Difference Made by (2) The Blood

The second part of the answer is the Blood. Many people confuse the Cross and the Blood. Do not confuse them. If you have done so in the past, let me now try to help you to discriminate between them. Of course, they go together - they are two parts of a whole; but there is a difference, and the Blood itself has two aspects.

First of all, there is the aspect of implication. You can never have the blood unless a slaying has taken place, unless the death of a body has taken place. The word 'body' in the Scriptures is often used representatively of the whole man. When Paul says, "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice" (Rom. 12:1), he means yourselves, your entirety, the whole being. He speaks of the whole "body of the flesh" (Col. 2:11). There the body is just the 'embodiment', as it were, of the whole man. But note that nowhere in the Scripture is it said or implied that Christ's Blood in

itself carried or bore our sin. Perhaps you ask, What about blood shed for the remission of sins (Heb. 9:22)? Let me repeat: it is nowhere said or implied that Christ 's Blood bore our sins. "He bare our sins in his" (not blood, but) "body upon the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24). It was His Body that bore our sins. The shedding of the Blood implied, carried with it, the fact that the Body had been broken, had been slain, had been offered. It was not that which was shed which bore our sins. It was His Body which was broken that bore our sins. The implication is that there is an entire body or embodiment of things that is slain, and in His Body He was made sin for us, and the judgment, the sword of God, fell upon His Body. He was smitten and stricken of God in His Body. It was then that our sins were met and judged and dealt with.

But by that slaying His Blood was released: and, look where you will in the Bible, you will never find other than this concerning the Blood, that the Blood is always the vivifying factor - not the death factor, but the vivifying factor. "The life... is in the blood" (Lev. 17:11). "He that... drinketh my blood hath eternal life" (John 6:54). The sprinkling of the blood upon the tabernacle and its vessels, and everything else, spoke of a vivifying, a making alive; and in the Blood of Christ an incorruptible life, which was never touched by our sin, was released for all future purposes, in principle to vivify everything. The Blood itself is the vivifying of everything subsequent to the slaying, to the dying, to the offering. The life has been taken from the body which has been made sin, or which has borne the sin, and released to become the life of another body. We are members of Christ, of His Body; and all that is represented by His life, His deathless life, the life that could not see death, could not touch death - if it could have been touched of sin, it could have been touched of death; that holy, perfect life that was in Him, signifying by His Blood that it was incorruptible, that it could not taste death - all that has been released by His slaying to be the life of His spiritual corporate Body.

The Levites came into the good of that. They came into the immediate value, on the one hand, of the slaying of a body, the setting aside, the cutting off, of the whole body of the flesh, the natural life, the self-life, as dominant; and, on the other, of all the vivifying power of the released and sprinkled blood, speaking of another life and another body. Again, I beseech you, do not draw artificial distinctions between the people of God, but see that these are spiritual principles. It is a tremendous thing to have entered into the meaning of the setting aside of the body of the flesh. All Christians have not done that. Many of us know in our own experience that at one time we laboured in the flesh with natural resources for God, and very earnestly so, and yet we knew we were not getting very far - it was a heart breaking business. Yes, until the day came when the Lord brought it home to us that that whole body has been set aside. It is out of another life and in another relationship with the Lord Jesus that this ministry is to be fulfilled.

The Difference Made by (3) The Spirit

The Cross, the Blood; and thirdly, the Spirit, the anointing of the priests. The Cross is on the death side, but the Blood and the Spirit are on the vital side, the potency side, the resurrection side, so do not always dwell on the Cross aspect. The Blood and the Spirit are united, and this is an important point. It is the Spirit of life - "the law of the Spirit of life", as Paul calls it (Rom. 8:2) - which means that this life that is released through the Cross is not just some abstract element, some force at work. This life which is given us in Christ in and by the Holy Spirit is conscious life and intelligent life. Let me say to young Christians, to any who are new on the way of the Lord: this is one of the most important things that you should know. The conscious, intelligent life of the Holy Spirit in you is going to make all the difference between a child and a grown Christian. It differentiates between those who just do what is expected of them, because they are told it is the thing that they ought to do, and those who know in their hearts what they should do, and need not to be told. How good it is not to need telling everything, when your life with the Lord is such that if

anybody does bring some point to your notice, you are able to say, 'Yes, the Lord has spoken to me about that already: the Lord has been dealing with me on that matter.' Do you not think it would make a lot of difference if Christians on the whole were like that? - if they could say, 'The Lord has been speaking to me, the Lord has been showing me, the Lord has been putting me right; the Lord has been touching things in my life; He has been talking to me about my dress - or my no dress'?

Perhaps this sounds amusing; but there are many practical matters. One is distressed at the way in which some Christians can behave, even in this matter of dressing - or not dressing - when they come into the house of prayer. They have the Word of God before them. What is the matter? Either they are not reading the Word of God, or the Spirit finds some difficulty. I beseech you to give heed to this. Many, many matters which concern our spiritual growth, our full growth, depend upon this - that the Holy Spirit within is truly governing. The thing that has distressed and appalled me perhaps more than anything else for a large number of years is that dear children of God, men of God, servants of God, can accept and pass on things that are positive lies, and yet never seem to hear the Holy Spirit inside say anything about it. What is the matter? I tell you - if the Holy Spirit within us is really in government, and having His way, we shall never hear a lie without knowing that He does not agree with it. We shall have a check-up about it. We shall never be able to speak or pass on a falsehood without something inside 'going wrong', so that sooner or later we have to go back to the Lord and say, 'Well, Lord, I do not know how it is, but I feel that was wrong. I must get right over that.' Do you not think it would make a great difference to Christians and Christianity if it were all like that? What is the matter? I am afraid the Cross needs still to do something, and the Blood. I pass no judgment, but I have to draw conclusions from facts. The fact is that it is possible.

Yes, there is a great difference between childhood and maturity. The Levites were spiritual men who had to walk before God, and were checked up all along by the anointing, by the Spirit. It was not an objective fact, as it was with the whole mass of Israel, that the cloud and the pillar represented the presence of the Holy Spirit overshadowing, and, in a general kind of way, leading. With these men that thing became an inward positive reality. They had discernment as to the movement of the Spirit, and their discernment was for the rest of the people who had not got it.

Do take this to heart. These are the principles. It is very important that we should be clear on these things, because it is going to make a great difference to life, to service, to ministry, and to going through. I am glad to see that the Levites, although they were in the van when the people passed through Jordan overflowing all its banks, were not a separate, exclusive company of people, but were in the midst of God's people, as a spiritual company.

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