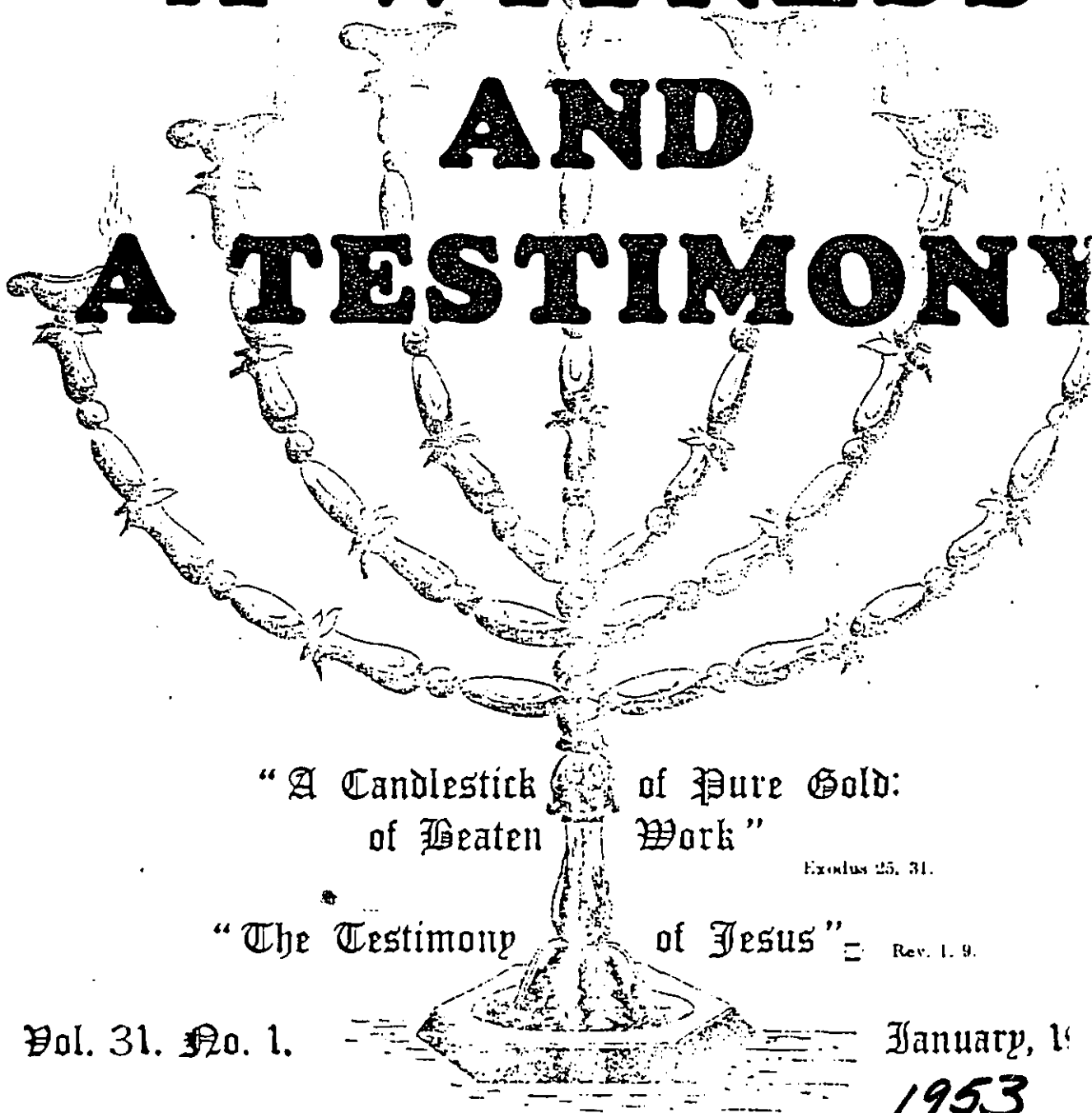


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# A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY



“A Candlestick of Pure Gold:  
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Exodus 25. 31.

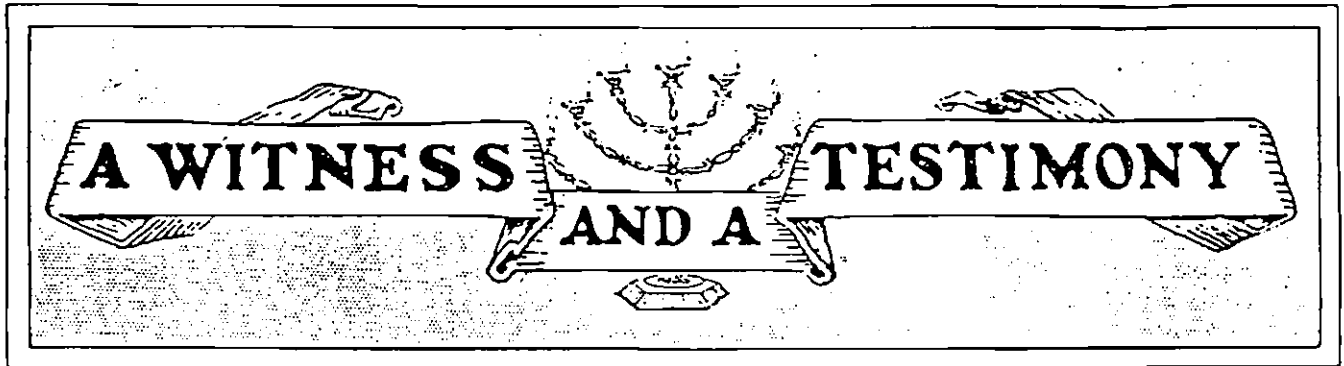
“The Testimony of Jesus” — Rev. 1. 9.

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## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRIST

### I. IN RELATION TO THE RACE AS IT IS

*"And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever—therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man" (Genesis iii. 22 - 24).*

*"And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew xxvii. 46).*

*"And there shall be no curse any more: and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein: and his servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face" (Revelation xxii. 3 - 4).*

#### THE FACE OF GOD

SO, with the book of Genesis and the book of the Revelation, we have the whole bound of human history. And as we read through the Scriptures this whole story of man's creation, calling and destiny, we seem to see that one matter governs the whole long record of human life, and this one matter is that of *the face of God*. The expulsion from the garden was expulsion from the face of the Lord. From that time the face of God was never again seen by man, except in tokens—such as His mercy, His goodness—and even then only on cer-

tain conditions; but His face in reality man did not and could not see.

And throughout this Book, we find that man's greatest blessing, highest good and deepest longing always related to the face of God. How often from the heart of man the cry is heard—"Lift thou up the light of thy countenance" (Ps. iv. 6); "Make thy face to shine on thy servant" (Ps. xxxi. 16); 'to walk in the light of his countenance' (Ps. lxxxix. 15). The deepest longing in the heart of man is ever for what that means, and his highest good is always seen to be connected with the face of God; while, on the other hand, man's deepest misery and desolation is always when God's face is turned away—when he senses that that countenance is not toward him. To be spiritually alive and sensitive, and to feel that there is a cloud over the face of the Lord, is the most miserable experience of which we are capable, the greatest desolation of heart.

#### THE ISSUE CENTRED IN THE CROSS OF CHRIST

Now, that great, shall I say, eternal issue of the face of God was brought to a focus in the Cross of Christ. It is, I think it can be said quite safely, the very heart of the Calvary story. At the beginning God drove the man out. The end of the Bible is "they shall see his face". But midway, not in

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

the Bible, as a book, but in this human history, the Cross gathers up that great matter of the face of God. On one side, that face is turned away—the man is in desolation. On the other side, that face is turned toward—there is a new hope, new joy, new prospect, all things are new: because once more the light of His countenance is, in the full sense, lifted upon believers. Genesis and Revelation meet at Calvary.

THE WILDERNESS OF THE  
TURNED-AWAY FACE OF GOD

A wilderness is always a type of desolation and death through the curse. The wilderness came when the Garden was lost. It was the very fruit of the curse. In other words, it was *the* outcome of God's face being turned away, and from that time we find the wilderness again and again coming up in the picture of human life. Israel in the wilderness spoke of the curse, desolation and death. In that wilderness, if Heaven had not intervened, they certainly would have perished—and they knew it, too. There was nothing there to assure of life. It was only because there was a Testimony in their midst that they could possibly live in the wilderness; and when their hearts were rightly adjusted to that Testimony, they lived above the wilderness. In the midst of death they were in life: in the midst of desolation they were in plenty: in the midst of the curse they were in blessing. And that Testimony was the Testimony of Jesus.

When, later, they went into the far captivity and knew the desolation again for seventy years, and at last the seventy years' accomplishment came into view, the prophet cried with his gospel of hope—“Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished” (Isa. xl. 1). The issue of that is that “the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose” (Isa. xxxv. 1). “In the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert” (Isaiah xxxv. 6).

## THE LORD JESUS IN THE WILDERNESS

But you know quite well that, set there for the real fulfilment—not for the symbolic or partial fulfilment, but for the real fulfilment—Isaiah liii has its place. “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him: and with his stripes we are healed.” The Lord Jesus went for forty days into the wilderness—the place of desolation,

the place of death, the place of the curse: that wilderness being the place of Satan's power, because he made it. Every wilderness belongs to the Devil. It is in the wilderness that you will always meet the Devil. In that place of Satan's power, that One would not have survived, had He not been a Heavenly Man with no relationship whatever to the wilderness; had He not just before gone to Jordan, and in figure died, and, rising, overcome death.

But it says that He was led “of the Spirit” into the wilderness (Matthew iv. 1). When He rose from the waters, when in figure He was risen from the dead triumphant, the Spirit came upon Him. By that Spirit He went into the wilderness, and there, in virtue of a victory already secured, He overcame.—

The wilderness is always a symbol of the desolation of death because of the curse. Look back to Israel's life in the wilderness. You remember one of the most poignant of all the figures of the tabernacle ritual—that of the scapegoat. You never read that little account, I am sure, without feeling deeply and desperately sorry for that goat, with all the curse transferred by identifying hands to its head, and then led by a priest to the outer bounds of the camp and beyond, away, till the last sign of human life is out of sight, and then, driven from that last man, alone in the wilderness to die, forsaken of God, desolate, bearing sin.

Well, that is the Cross. That is the meaning, but only a shadow of the meaning, of the words we read in Matthew xxvii—“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” “Why hast Thou turned Thy face away from Me? Why am I in this awful desolation, beside which every other kind of desolation is nothing—the desolation of losing God? Why?” Well, thank God, there is probably no one reading these lines who could not answer that question. But it is not my object at this moment to try to answer it. I am just pointing to two sides of this great matter—the lost face of God and the regained face of God.

So the heavens were closed against that man; so that face was lost as for eternity; so the deep and awful desolation settled down upon his soul: and for ever that orphan soul, that desolated soul, is crying, ‘Where can I find Him? Where can I find Him?’ “*Oh that I knew where I might find him . . . Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, when he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him*” (Job xxiii. 3, 8-9). And yet there has never been one who has known that desolation.



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and that sense of forsakenness, in any measure commensurate with what the Lord Jesus knew, in the hour; in the moment, of that cry. That desolation has broken many a soul. Ah, but never in the way in which it broke His heart.

He had sensed what was coming. There have been many arguments about His cup and His exceeding sorrowfulness and His cry—"If it be possible, let this cup pass away from me" (Matthew xxvi. 39). I think the only answer is here: that He sensed what was coming. It was certainly not His physical death and sufferings. He was going, of necessity, to be forsaken of the Father with whom, through those thirty-three years. He had had unbroken fellowship. Favours were shown to Him in His birth; He grew in that favour as a lad; He came out into public life, and the open heavens declared "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew iii. 17). In the secret of His own heart He was in the favour of the Father. He dwelt in the bosom of the Father every day. And now that was to be withdrawn; He was to know the loss of that. Surely there is nothing to approach it!

We are speaking of facts, and if we were to speak of any experience of our own, it would be almost approaching sacrilege. And yet some of you may have known what it is to have a very blessed time with the Lord—when the Lord has seemed so real, and everything was betokening the Lord's nearness and the Lord's favour—and then it has gone, completely gone: all the tokens seem to have been withdrawn and the Lord seems to have gone out of your world entirely. You will say that there is nothing more miserable than an experience like that. But how small compared with this! How infinitely terrible that He, who had from eternity been in the bosom of the Father, should lose that—not as an act in a play, not as something staged, but as a reality, a terrible soul reality. He was taking the place of all who had lost the face of God, in order to get it back again for them—for you, for me.

#### THE LORD JESUS AND THE OPEN HEAVEN OF GOD'S FACE

And you can look at the other side, the open heaven, the face of God. He had it in His birth—all heaven was open. He had it in His childhood. How manifest it was we do not know, but we do know that at the age of twelve He could speak of God as "My Father" (Luke ii. 49). This was surely expressive of a lad's life with God in very inti-

mate and affectionate terms. At His baptism, the heavens were opened to Him and a voice was heard saying, "Thou art my beloved Son". To Nathanael He said, "Thou shalt see greater things . . . Ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man" (John i. 50 - 51). His transfiguration again saw those same heavens opened, that same voice attesting Him as the beloved Son. And after the desolation of the Cross, at His 'receiving up in glory' (I Timothy iii. 16)—I like that better than the word 'ascension'; His 'receiving up', that was how they liked to put it then—the heavens were opened for the great reception. There is no question here; no having to stand at the gates and meet the Apostle Peter to get a passport! No, He was "received up in glory"; the heavens opened. And at Pentecost the heavens were opened, and "he hath poured forth this" (Acts i. 33); and through the heavens which He Himself had opened by His merit, by His Cross, He attested, for all who would believe, that God's face was back again in their direction. How could you better express those days of Pentecost and following than in the words that the light of God's countenance was upon them? What joyous days they were, what precious days!—and it was simply because they were in the light of God's countenance.

But there is a still more intimate witness. "Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed?" (Acts xix. 2). The Holy Spirit is given, not only to the Church as a whole, but to every member of that Church to dwell within. And what is the Holy Spirit dwelling in the believer? It is only, in other words, that the Lord is for us and with us again. His face is in our direction. The old invocation, which has become a benediction was—"The Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace" (Numbers vi. 25 - 26). Is that not just it, that when we come into the good of the work of the Cross and of Pentecost, that is, the coming of the Holy Spirit, that is the light of His countenance, and it is peace? When His face is not toward us there is no peace. The indwelling Spirit is just another way of saying that the face of the Lord is toward them that fear Him, and the great glorious consummation of that is in the words in Revelation: "His servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face" (Rev. xxii. 3, 4)—as though that were the crowning blessing of all, the inclusive blessing of all, in the last chapter of the Bible. "They shall see his face": this is the one thing that has been the great issue through all

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

the ages—the face of God in its towardness being man's greatest blessing, in its loss man's greatest desolation. You are not surprised therefore to read in the same utterance—"there shall be no curse any more". "No more curse . . . they shall see his face".

## IN CHRIST AN OPEN HEAVEN FOR US

Well, all that is, I know, very simple, but we shall not do ourselves any harm by contemplating what He won for us in that wilderness, how great a thing it was that resulted from that cry. The answer given to that cry—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—is our supreme and all-inclusive blessing: it is that we may never know any more forsaking of God. Oh, put your feet down upon that. It is not as simple as it sounds. No more forsaking of God! Have you, a believer, a believer perhaps for many years, in full devotion to the Lord—have you never been tempted to believe that God had forsaken you, God had left you, had given you up, washed His hands of you, parted company with you, withdrawn? If you have never had that temptation, I am not going to say that you ought to, but I will say that I do not think you will get through your course in a really spiritual life without having it, and more than once. As in Adam's case, so with every son of Adam and every child of God, with every member of this human race, the Devil's greatest work is to get between us and God. Once he has done that, if he can establish himself there between us and God, it is an end of all things, it is hopeless. But in the case of a believer he cannot now do that in actuality. He can only do it in effect, by the attitude that a believer takes toward this great thing that happened on the Cross, by the answer that the believer will give in his or her own heart to Christ's question. "Why hast thou forsaken me?" If you really will give the answer, 'In order that I might never be forsaken'—if you give that answer and stay there, you have entered into the value of what the Lord Jesus accomplished in destroying the works of the Devil, especially his supreme work of getting between you and God.

Calvary is always an open door, an open way, to God's face. You know that it was ever by Jordan that the place of God's face was reached—always by Jordan. Of the promised land the Lord said, "The eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year" (Deut. xi. 12); His face would be toward it, and so it was described as the land of

unspeakable blessing. Israel never arrived there except by the Jordan. When they came back from the captivity to the land again, where God's face was, they had to go across the Jordan again or through the Jordan. When the Lord Jesus went to the Jordan, He passed that way in order to come to the place where the heavens were opened, where the face of God was seen; always by Jordan to the place of God's face—in other words, always by the Cross. It is by the Cross that we come into the light of His countenance.

## THE VICTORY OF FAITH

But the point here is that faith is the victory—(1 John v. 4). It is faith in one thing. If you pin your faith to this one thing, all other things will come into line, all the other problems will be overcome: if you really will pin your faith to this—that the Lord Jesus, in that terrible moment, lost the face of God in order to secure it for us forever, so that we might never be out of the light of that countenance. He has brought that face back to us—and what blessing there is in that! I am not saying that we may never experience some shadow over His face because of our folly, because of our grieving Him. We have to admit sometimes that there is a shadow between us and the Lord. Ah, but never need it be total eclipse, never His forsaking. He is behind that shadow, and a thousand times we who have known such shadows, because of either our unbelief or some other grieving Him, when we have adjusted, cleared that matter up, got right with the Lord, we have found Him there just where He was. He is behind the shadows; His word abides—"I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee" (Hebrews xiii. 5).

## THE FALL A FALL INTO THE HANDS OF SATAN

Surely Israel has a many-sided testimony, and this is one side. God has written the story of His willingness to be toward man. That story is written very fully in the life of Israel. If ever a people might have been fully and finally forsaken, Israel might have been. I think there is nothing that proves the fall more than Israel—proves the fall not in a general but in a specific way. We say of Adam that the fall took place. Adam fell. How did he fall? Where did he fall? Into what did he fall? He fell into the hands of Satan, to be used as Satan's instrument against God, and his fall de-

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veloped in Israel. They fell into Satan's hands. "Ye are of your father the devil" (John viii. 44), said the Lord Jesus. They fell into Satan's hands to be his instruments against God to crucify His very Son. There is nothing deeper than to be the instrument of Satan to kill God, to put God out of His place. That is why the record of Israel's spirit and attitude is given us so fully in the Gospels, leading up to Israel's crucifying of Christ. Their attitude is all brought out by Christ, and He focuses upon this—that what they did to Him they did to God. And so in the Cross of the Lord Jesus we see a people, a nation, held by Satan, having sold themselves into the hands of Satan to crucify God and put Him out of His place. That is not too strong, to speak of Satan's instrument against God. That is the fall—into the hands of Satan. That opens up the Word of God in many ways, from many angles. It is a terrible thing.

When the Lord Jesus came, there was one who, looking upon that infant, said, prophetically, "to grant unto us that we *being delivered out of the hand of our enemies . . .*" (Luke i. 74)—and that went far beyond any earthly enemies. Have you really felt the force of what I have just been saying? Have there not been times when, through duress and suffering and oppression, through spiritual trial to the depths, Satan has got so near to your soul or has been so bound up with your soul that it has seemed he would turn you against God, make you bitter toward the Lord, make you the enemy of God, bring up such feelings in you? These things are real. That is what he is trying to do all the time—to get man back into his power, to get the believer into his power, to use him against God. There is no instrument more useful to Satan against God than a Christian. You expect unbelievers, men of the world, to be against God; but see a Christian revolting against the Lord, and that gives Satan just what he is after—one who is supposed to know the Lord, in rebellion against Him. What a battle there is over that!—but what a triumph our Lord has secured to get us right out of that realm, to destroy all the impingement of Satan's insinuations and suggestions. If you do ever know the cloud, the temptation, remember Calvary: remember that the Lord Jesus has established for ever the ground upon which God will never forsake you, never leave you, never withdraw His face from you. Believe that. That is the faith which overcomes, and it is a mighty overcoming, going right back to the beginning.

## DELIVERANCE BY THE CROSS OF CHRIST

"Why hast thou forsaken me?" I am so glad that the story of the Cross does not end there. The cry, the awful cry, is "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?", but the last words from the Cross are not such. "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke xxiii. 46). He is back on the ground of perfect fellowship with the Father and absolute trust. The victory is gained, the work is done, the enemy is defeated, the ground is secured. Whatever Satan says, as he does in our deep hours of spiritual experience, about the Lord having given us up, departed from us—all that sort of thing; whatever he says, it is not true. It may be that you do not feel the full weight of that; but if ever you come, as perhaps some of you have come, to a time, such as many of the most faithful and devoted and greatly-used servants of God have known, when the dark forces spread themselves over, gather around in their hordes, and seek to come between you and your Lord and then begin their whisperings—'The Lord has given you up, handed you over', or something to that effect—when you come to that place, then I trust you will know that this word is no light word, no unimportant word: for the last depths of Calvary were fathomed in the moment when our Lord cried that bitter cry and gained the answer and came out victorious and into rest. "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." That was not for Himself; that was for us—for you, for me. I feel that that is the Good Friday morning message: the depth of Calvary and the eternal value of His having secured for us the face of God. Never, never is it necessary for anyone to know that desolation of God-forsakenness while they put their trust, their faith, upon His taking up this age-long issue as Man for man—the issue of "the light of thy countenance".

So let us rejoice that we have an open heaven secured for us by our blessed Lord. We have but stated the truth, the fact, of this thing. There is much more bound up with it, which the Lord may show us as we go on, as to what kind of man it is who enjoys that opened heaven, but that is with the Lord. Let us thank Him for the fact that we may have the heaven opened to us. He has done it. But to a Nathanael He will say, "Ye *shall* see the heaven opened". God grant that we may all be in that blessed position.

T. A-S.



## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

## GOD'S VOICE FOR TO-DAY

## VI. GOD'S VOICE OUT OF ZION

*Reading : Psalm xlvi.*

*"Is there any word from the Lord?" (Jeremiah xx.vii. 17).*

THE most wonderful moment in a very wonderful psalm was the moment when God spoke. "He uttered his voice" (verse 6). It was the voice of supreme authority, the voice of rebuke to evil powers, of destruction to God's enemies and of deliverance to His harassed people. It was universal in its range: "He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth" (verse 9)

In our previous talks we have been concerned with God's voice to His people, seeking to answer the question as to what is His timely message for those who belong to Him. It is most necessary to know what God is saying to His people in these days. Now, however, we are to consider the matter of God speaking *through* His people. What has God to say by means of His church?

## THE CHALLENGE OF THE HOUR

It is surely no exaggeration to say that the words of this psalm truly depict the conditions which surround or threaten the church of God as a whole. If ever there was a time when the earth seemed to be "moved", the waters to "roar and be troubled", and the mountains to "shake with the swelling thereof", surely that time is now. It would be callous and indeed sinful of us to be indifferent to the sufferings of the people of God worldwide, just because things are not too uncomfortable for us here at home. The church is not especially located in England or in English-speaking countries; it is scattered throughout the whole earth. And it is found, as never before, in the midst of diabolical forces of spiritual enmity, such as have not been equalled since the dreadful hour of Calvary's conflict, when all hell was mobilised in an attempt to destroy the Lord Jesus. At that time the Lord was the sole embodiment of the kingdom of God here on earth. To-day that kingdom is represented by the church. His Body. It is true that Christ promised that the gates of Hades should not prevail against His rock-founded church, but the very promise seems to prophesy that hell will do its worst.

What will turn the battle? What can deal adequately with the raging fury of hell? There is only one answer—"He uttered his voice, the earth melted" (verse 6). Zion is at the heart of this cosmic conflict. The Lord plans to use her to answer the challenge. It is not enough for God's voice to be heard *by* Zion; it must be heard *through* her. Zion must be so in touch with the Lord and so truly indwelt by Him, that through her, out from her midst, God can speak defiance and defeat to His enemies.

## GOD'S ANSWER THROUGH ZION

It is the Lord's purpose to have a people through whom He can utter His voice. I do not mean the dissemination of the Scriptures. I do not mean preaching. I mean an effective spiritual utterance, in the energy of the Holy Spirit, which will express His authority over all the unruly forces of evil. This is no time to be occupied with merely personal, local or sectional interests. We are challenged by a problem as big as the world and as mighty as hell. We all feel, only too acutely, that men cannot handle this. Only God can deal with it. If only God would utter His voice! But is it not clear that He needs a people through whom to speak? Is it not clear that the church is meant to be the spiritual city by means of which His authority is expressed? God's purpose, in gathering His redeemed people together and constituting them a spiritual city in Christ, is that they may provide the place for His presence, the seat of His authority. "God is in the midst of her" (verse 5). When Israel was in a good spiritual condition, God was known in Zion and she was the city of the great King.

This psalm points on to a great spiritual fact—the fact of the city of God. "the Jerusalem that is above". This is not a convenient analogy or a fanciful spiritualisation of the Jewish capital. Zion is a great and abiding spiritual reality, the corporate entity of a people vitally related to Christ, who is the greater David, the eternal King. The psalm was prophetic, as witness its assertion. "There is a river" (verse 4). In point of fact Jerusalem, unlike most of the great cities of the world, did not stand on the banks of any river. Spiritually, however, it is already true, "There is a river". It might equally

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have been affirmed, 'There is a city', and this would not have referred to the earthly Jerusalem, except as this is a type of the heavenly Jerusalem, "the city of the living God" (Hebrews xii. 22). It was for this eternal city that Abraham waited, "the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews xi. 10). Ezekiel, speaking firstly of the recovery and restoration of the earthly Jerusalem, passed far beyond time and space in his visions, and spoke of the city of the Lord's presence, having its house filled with the glory of the Lord. Only this spiritual house can fully satisfy the Lord's explanation—"Son of man, this is the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet . . ." (Ezekiel xliii. 7). As Luther tells us in his great hymn, this is the city around which the nations rage and the kingdoms are moved. Although the world cannot see it, all world history converges upon it. Satan makes all things to work together for evil, in his efforts to overthrow this great bulwark against his wicked purposes. Thank God, we know that he must fail, for God makes all things to work together for good for those who have a part in His eternal purpose to administer His kingdom by means of a people in living association with His Son.

There is no doubt about the identity of the city. Nor is there any doubt about the fury of the spiritual assault upon it. The need of the hour is for a people who can exercise the spiritual authority of the mighty Name of the Lord Jesus. The kingdom of darkness must be met by the voice of God, speaking out from Zion.

#### THE POWER OF THE DIVINE PRESENCE

It is the place of the Divine presence: "God is in the midst of her" (verse 5). Jerusalem lost its glory when God no longer dwelt there. The people of God have no justification for their existence unless it can truly be said that God is made known by them. This was the glory of the sons of Jacob, in spite of their unworthiness; it was this which distinguished them from all the other nations. They were made different from all others, not only by bearing the outward mark of circumcision, nor by their possession of the great treasure of the Scriptures; it was not only that they were good people, or sincere, or devout. All these were valuable features, but they were secondary. The one supreme and unique characteristic that marked them off from all others was that God was in the midst of them. If you visited them, you met God.

Dare we measure ourselves, or our own church or assembly, by this standard? Nothing less will satisfy the Lord, since it was for this purpose that He gathered us out from the world and into Christ. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, seeking to right the disorders in their church, he told them that the proper effect of the life of fellowship together is that even a stranger, coming in, would exclaim, "God is among you indeed" (1 Cor. xiv. 25). This is the meaning and justification of the heavenly city, whose life and ministry is marked by the presence of the living God. Whatever else we may say or do, if we fail in this we are coming short of our true vocation. It is often asked where, in our day, can the voice of God be heard by His people. We may pertinently further enquire as to where is that people through whom God may utter His voice against the hosts of spiritual wickedness. Where indeed?

#### THE GOD OF JACOB

In this psalm two inspiring statements are made as to the character of the Lord in the midst. One of them relates to His grace: "The God of Jacob is our refuge" (vv. 7 & 11). It is very important that stress should be laid on His being *Jacob's* God, since we must never for a moment forget the marvel of Divine grace. The original Israel was a most unworthy man; it was grace alone which made him a prince with God. It would be fatal if we should think of our vocation, as the people with Throne power, being in any way connected with effort, merit or ability on our part. This has been one of the tragedies of teaching concerning spiritual authority and warfare. Christians have rightly perceived that through them should be exercised the authority of the Risen Lord, but then have fallen into the snare of thinking themselves superior to others, becoming conceited or censorious. Thus they have lost their own effectiveness and brought the truth of God into disrepute. The God of *Jacob* is our refuge in this conflict.

The more we read of Jacob, the more astounded we are that ever God could have tolerated him. Even we can perceive something of the patience and love which were involved in the choice of such a man. Exactly the same is true of us. Grace, however, means more than pitying kindness and patience. It means a strong determination so to deal with the man that he will become completely transformed. God loved Jacob as he was, but His love could never be satisfied until the man had be-



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come what he ought to be—Israel. "The God of Jacob is our refuge". We know His presence among us as the God of grace, patient and pardoning. We also know Him as the One who is tireless in His discipline and chastening, who keeps His hand upon us in a very severe government of love. Jacob often found that it broke down all his own natural strength. Nevertheless in his brokenness he became a man of power, a prince with God. There is a great cost in having the God of Jacob in the midst, a cost to the flesh, to human ambition and to personal pride; but it is an absolute necessity if the Lord is to find a human instrument through which His authority can be exercised.

## THE LORD OF HOSTS

The Divine presence is also described in terms of battle—"The Lord of hosts is with us" (verses 7 and 11). It is right that we should give proper heed to this feature, for it is always present when the city of God is brought into prominence. God has gone out to war, to subdue and destroy those elements which dispute His authority and which fight against Him, and Zion is the focal point of all the conflict. The church is not just on the defensive, huddling together in a timid attempt to survive, and praying to be kept hidden and isolated from the conflict of the ages. It may seem so at times. Our opening verses may appear to suggest it, for they speak of God being our refuge and a very present help. Yet before we reach the end of the psalm, we find that the whole earth is reeling under the reaction of the Lord to His foes, with Zion playing an important part in their overthrow. The city is not moved, but everything else is.

It so happened on more than one occasion, when a siege of Jerusalem became a turning point in world events. This very psalm is attributed by many to the time of the dreadful siege by the Assyrians in Hezekiah's day, when Isaiah urged the king and the people to be strong in faith, for God was with them. It was strikingly true that, through the prophet's ministry, God uttered His voice to the complete destruction of the whole invading army. The Lord of hosts was certainly with them, and so effectually routed the foe that Isaiah could aptly affirm, "*Behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth*" (verses 8, 9). The notable feature of that siege was that it marked the end of Assyrian power. The outcome of the conflict was not only that the people of God survived, but that a great world empire was smitten

and its proud king brought to his ruin. It was as though the flower of the Assyrian army was enticed by God to come out and try conclusions with Jerusalem, only to find that, instead of meeting a few feeble Jews, they met God, and were destroyed by the power of His presence. "*He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariots in the fire*" (verse 9).

There is no question about the provocation to Satan which is provided by even the simplest and weakest expression of Zion, but we need to realise that there is a Divine purpose in all this antagonism. The Lord does not gather His saints together in church life in order that they may be admired or admire themselves as something especially good—or scriptural. His purpose is to provoke His enemies, and then to overthrow them. The Satanic system must be attacked and spiritually defeated. The Lord has involved His people in this conflict. Though weak in themselves, they are mighty when His presence is in their midst, and He has entrusted to them the honour of standing for the universal exaltation of His Son.

## SUBMISSION TO HIS LORDSHIP

"*He uttered his voice.*" This will be literally fulfilled one day, for it is as the Word of God that Christ will be revealed, riding forth with a sharp sword proceeding out of His mouth, and treading down all His enemies (Rev. xix. 11-16). This event is shown to be the climax of the scenes of judgment in the book of the Revelation. It seems manifest, though, that the essential prelude to those judgments and the key to the whole book is in chapters ii and iii, where the Returning Lord is found in the midst of His churches. He is there with the sharp two-edged sword of His Word to deal with His own people. They are first. If they are to be with Him in His battles and to use His Name against the power of the enemy, then they must be purged of all that will not submit to His lordship in their own hearts. When the Lord can truly exercise His authority in His church, then, and only then, can that same authority be applied by the church to the situation all around.

The lordship of Christ must first operate in us in order that it may be ministered by means of us. This is indicated by the command, "*Be still, and know that I am God*" (verse 10). The city has no authority of itself; it can but provide the means or the agency through which the Lord may make known the power of His presence. If we begin to make plans, to follow our own impulses or to rely

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on our own energy, there will be no true registration of Divine power through us. If God is to utter His voice through Zion, then Zion must first submit to Him wholly and without reserve. "Be still." It is this that the natural heart finds so difficult. We hear the Lord's word, but we are not still under it. Either we dispute and argue, or else we rush prematurely to try to bring it to pass. "Be still." It is only so that we can provide the Lord with the purity of faith which is needed in order to co-operate with Him. The greatest need of our day is not a church which can advertise itself, a church which can make a great impression and gain many adherents, but a church which can be still and know that He is God.

It may well be that these words in the psalm are really addressed to the furious enemies, just as the Lord Jesus commanded the raging winds and waves to be silent before Him. It reminds us of the awful majesty of His speaking. "Be still, and know that I am God." They will not be still for us, but they are obliged to be subject to Him. Not that this lessens the responsibility of the Lord's people; it only makes it the more essential that we should be so in touch with Him that His enemies, in meeting us, have to reckon with Him.

### THE DAWN OF THE MORNING

The objective of the Lord's speaking is the return in glory of our Lord Jesus. "*God shall help her at the dawn of morning*" (verse 5, margin). Surely that dawn is very near. Whatever may be surmised about the period immediately preceding the Second Coming, the Scriptures seem to make it clear that they are to be very dark and perilous

days. For the saints in some lands these evil days seem already to have arrived. Perhaps we are entering into that darkest part of the night which heralds the approach of the dawn of the morning. If so, this may explain the severity of the trials and the intensity of the spiritual conflict.

There are two words for 'refuge' in this psalm. They are both rendered by the same English word, but in fact they are different. The opening words are, "*God is our refuge*", and in this case the word signifies a hiding place, a safe retreat, a shelter. This is why we first came to the Lord. We did not come because we were brave or strong, but because we were frightened. We fled to Jesus for refuge. Thank God that we did, and that we have found safety in Him. When, however, it reads, "*The God of Jacob is our refuge*", the word denotes a high tower. We are not cowering in fear, waiting for the all-clear to be sounded, but up in the observation post, looking out from the turret, waiting like sentries for the dawn of that morning which shall bring full victory. This is the church's proper place. The sinner's refuge is a place of hiding in Christ. The church's refuge is in the front of the battle. 'Oh, brothers, stand as men that wait.' We shall have the God of Jacob for our refuge. In Him we shall indeed be sheltered and protected. But we must stand for that great registration of God's voice which shall melt the earth, destroy the forces of darkness and establish the universality of the kingdom of His dear Son.

"Is there any word from the Lord?" There is! "*The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge*".

H. F.

## UNION WITH CHRIST

(continued)

### III. MARITAL UNION

"Or are ye ignorant, brethren (for I speak to men who know the law), how that the law hath dominion over a man for so long time as he liveth? For the woman that hath a husband is bound by law to the husband while he liveth: but if the husband die, she is discharged from the law of the husband. So then if, while the husband liveth, she be joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if the husband die, she is free from the law, so that she is no adulteress, though she be joined to

another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also were made dead to the law through the body of Christ: that ye should be joined to another, even to him who was raised from the dead, that we might bring forth fruit unto God" (Romans vii. 1-4).

"For the husband is head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, being himself the saviour of the body. . . . Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it; that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself a glorious

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*church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that, it should be holy and without blemish. Even so ought husbands also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his own wife loveth himself: for no man ever hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as Christ also the church; because we are members of his body. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but I speak in regard of Christ and of the Church" (Ephesians v. 23, 25-32).*

*"Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready" (Revelation xix. 7).*

*"And there came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, who were laden with the seven last plagues; and he spake with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb" (Revelation xxi. 9).*

*"Behold, I and the children whom God hath given me" (Hebrews ii. 13).*

## LEGAL AND SPIRITUAL UNION

I expect you have noticed that there are two aspects, offices, of this particular union with Christ, the marital union. There is that which is mentioned by Paul in the letter to the Romans, and there is that which is mentioned by him in the letter to the Ephesians and by John in the Revelation. One puts the marriage as having already taken place, and the other puts it in the future; and that looks difficult. How are you going to explain it?

Well, in exactly the same way as a number of other things are explained in the New Testament, a number of other things which seem to be a contradiction. There is the initial marriage of Romans, and the final marriage of Ephesians and Revelation, and the difference is that the initial is the legal and the final is the spiritual, and, as we were saying in an earlier study in this series, in various things in the New Testament we have both an initial and a final aspect. We were speaking then of sonship. We are sons, and yet we are to be sons; legally, we are already sons, but we are presently to become such spiritually, in the sense of possessing the inheritance. 'If sons, then heirs': we are legally heirs by our new birth, but we are certainly not in possession of our inheritance, not enjoying all that is our heritage in Christ.

It will take much more than this life, it will take all the ages to come, for us really to possess, appropriate and enjoy our inheritance.

Salvation is spoken of in this very way. We are saved, but we are yet to be saved, we shall be saved—it is put in the future. But it is just as definitely in the present—we are being saved. A lot of people have made a lot of trouble over that sort of thing, and have said that, because there is a future-tense reference to salvation in the New Testament, you can never know whether you are saved until you get to heaven. Well, we do not believe that, because it is not our experience. We know we are saved, but we also know that we are to be saved, and it does not mean that there is something that has come in between to make us unsaved; it simply points to this difference, that we see in so many connections, between our standing and our state, between the legal and the spiritual.

Later on, we shall be speaking about the House of God. Well, we are a spiritual house now. It is in present-tense terms. But we read—"whose house are we, if we hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto the end" (Heb. iii. 6). Again it looks as though we are thrown back, we have to undo something; but it is not like that at all.

Now here it is perhaps more distinctly seen, in this matter of the marriage relationship between the Church and Christ. Paul says in the Roman letter that we are married to another, "even to him who was raised from the dead". Yet the marriage supper of the Lamb lies future. "Blessed are they that are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev. xix. 9). That lies in the future, and a special blessedness is attached to it.

You see, there is a provisional factor governing the intentions of God—a provisional factor as to the realisation of the purposes of all the things that God has done and given and into which He has brought us. There is an 'if' all the time, and that 'if' does not relate to the legal position at all. The Corinthians were all right as to the legal position of being in Christ. The first letter opens with the statement of that—"sanctified in Christ Jesus". They are all right as to their legal position; they can claim in Christ salvation. But it is not long before the Apostle in writing to them begins to speak to them about provisional things: this building upon the foundation, and all that is put on the foundation, and then it all going up in smoke, and believers just getting into heaven without any-



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thing else. It was all right legally there. If you like to stand upon the legal basis, you can get to heaven if you are in Christ. But there is so much more than that, and the so much more may just be missed.

Apply it if you like to this very relationship. There are many people legally married, and that is all there is to it; it ends there. They have certain rights and privileges because of the legal position, but who wants to stay there? Who will be satisfied with that? There is infinitely more in it than that, and that is what is here in the difference between the initial and the final, the legal and the spiritual. A very big difference indeed exists between those two. Or that difference may be graduated, as in the natural; the blessings of the relationship may be more or less. And that is how it is with Christians: they may be more or less in the blessings of this marriage relationship with the Lord.

#### FELLOWSHIP AND COMPANIONSHIP

Let us try to sum this up in a few simple, and I think quite obvious, matters. Keeping to the illustration, or the type, the first marriage relationship of the first Adam; going back to look at that and look into it, and asking what were the Divine thoughts in it, we can transfer these thoughts to Christ and the Church, Christ and ourselves, in this most blessed of all the relationships—for indeed this is the most blessed of all the relationships with Christ. What was God's thought?

First of all, the Scripture indicates that He was prompted to bring about this union in the creating of the woman by the idea of companionship. "It is not good that the man should be alone" (Gen. ii. 18). That is all. But there is a wealth in that. It almost seems presumption to transfer that to Christ and the Church, and yet there are so many more extra factors and features in the relationship of the Church to Christ, as His wife, that confirm and bear that out. This is not the only thing. The bride-types of the Old Testament are so rich and so full of confirmatory factors that you may transfer the thought to Christ and the Church. There is a whole wealth of evidence and proof that they did point on to Christ and the Church. We are not going to take up that study just now, but there it is. The proof is abundant, and therefore we may, presumptuous as it seems, transfer this very point to our relationship with our Lord: that the Church has been created by God because of this very

prompting of interest in and desire for companionship for His Son.

If you look at the Lord Jesus in the days in which He was here, you cannot fail to see how He longed for fellowship. Perhaps one of the saddest words that ever came from Him was—"Ye . . . shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me" (John xvi. 32). But while that did not qualify His utterance or in any way make it a comparative thing, there was something of sadness about His word 'I am alone'. It is quite clear that He was always seeking companionship. He was a Man and He had the sense of this need of others, or another. It is a Divine thing. There is something about Christ which calls for fellowship—and it is a wonderful thing how the New Testament takes up that word 'fellowship'. What a rich word it is! I wish you would just get down to your concordance, which will give you this word 'fellowship' in the original. You will find in that word alone a wealth of study and meditation, something very precious indeed. "Ye were called into the fellowship of his Son" (I Cor. i. 9).

Well, that is, to begin with, the thought, the idea, of marital union: companionship or fellowship. Fellowship, in the first place, before companionship: just fellowship, that is all. The first note, the predominant note, in this relationship is simply fellowship.

What is fellowship? Well, fellowship is identity of life and purpose. Christ wanted those with Him in identity of life and identity of purpose, one heart with His heart; and you and I have been called into such a relationship. It is high, it is holy, it is precious that you and I should supply the Lord Jesus with a deep heart desire and longing for those who shall be in identification with His life and His purpose. That is all we will say for the moment, but that is the first step in the meaning of marital union.

Companionship seems to me to go just a little further even than that, or to add an extra feature—for companionship, while certainly including what we have just said about fellowship, is the mutual complement, where each one makes up what is lacking in the other, each one makes a contribution to the other and fulfils the other; and it seems very wonderful—for that word in Ephesians, "the fulness of him" (Eph. i. 22), is the 'complement' of Him, the 'making full' of Him, the 'making complete' of Christ—it seems marvellous that the Church could give something to Christ to

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make Him complete. It sounds like heresy to say it, yet there it is. It is clearly stated that there is a heritage which He has in the Church. What is "his inheritance in the saints"? It is something that the Church has to give to Him. I am not stopping to say what that is. It is a statement of fact that the Lord sees the Church as able to give Him something, provide Him with something—an opportunity, an occasion, a vessel, a means, a way—something which otherwise He has not got but which He must have. Well, we are here on this earth to be for Christ what He needs here. And as for His giving us anything, that goes without saying.

So, then, companionship is a making good from one to the other, the filling up, the complement of each other. That is the marital relationship. This is the heavenly idea of marriage.

### THE VINDICATION OF CHRIST BY THE FAMILY

And then we find that, in the creation of this relationship at the beginning, it was that they together might be a vessel, one vessel, to contain the great trust of *life*. It is not a mechanical thing and it is not just a doctrinal, ecclesiastical, formal or legal thing. It is a vital thing. That is, it is a matter of life. And so this life was to express itself and with them together, the deposit of this sacred trust of life. That Satan captured that trust, and has captured that trust ever since, is perhaps the deepest tragedy and catastrophe in the whole history of the human race. Oh, to-day, the awful tragedy of propagation! That is a terrible story. The trust of life, the trust of transmitting that life, was a sacred and holy trust to be guarded solemnly for God—and Satan captured it.

Passing from the type to the antitype, you see this trust is between Christ and His Church as the Bridegroom and the bride, as the Husband and the wife, this wonderful trust of spiritual propagation, spiritual increase. Where there are no souls being born something has gone wrong. The whole Divine idea has broken down, and where there is no concern and desire about it, something has gone wrong. Need I say any more? We are brought by our marriage relationship to Christ into a most solemn and sacred trust of being the vehicle by which He shall see His seed and be satisfied. He is vindicated in His family, His life is vindicated. In Isaiah liii you notice that His being cut off from the earth, having His name cut off, having His being cut off, the whole story of the determination to bring an

end to Him, and of the effort of Satan to cut off His seed, is written there; but then the statement is, "he shall see his seed". Good Friday is past and Easter Day is here—and He shall see His seed. Blessed be God, He can already see it in the earth in some measure. It will be 'a great multitude which no man can number', no man *can* number. Men can count pretty high; but they shall not be able to number His seed. It will be as the stars of the heaven, as the sand of the seashore. He is vindicated by His seed; Christ is vindicated by the salvation of souls. Christ is vindicated by the Church being the vessel and the instrument of His self-realisation in that way. Did you notice how the statement in Romans vii finished? "Joined to another . . . that we might bring forth fruit unto God".

### THE ULTIMATE SPIRITUAL UNION

With one very brief return to the point with which we started, we will close. Here is the legal, and here is how the legal ought to work out to the spiritual—to the spiritual union which is ultimate. The end of this thing is seen in the marriage supper of the Lamb. This means that the legal union has been fulfilled to the utmost, that these two are not only in this legal relationship as husband and wife, legally married and that is all there is to it. They are now more and more and ever more being married, if we may put it that way; they are growing into one another. The fellowship is dependent, the mutual contribution is increasing. One is becoming ever more to the other and the other to the one, and at last there is this bridal company 'following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth', without a demur, without a question, without any rebellion, without any insubordination. The thing is to be eventually a spiritual fulness of oneness. That, of course, is how earthly married life ought to be if it is after the heavenly pattern—just a growing into each other, becoming incapable of getting on without each other, until at last there is such a merging that nothing whatever of difference or distance remains; it is complete unity.

That is the marriage supper. I think. "His wife hath made herself ready": that is, something has happened that has got rid of the final disparity. There is still a lot of disparity between us and our Lord, a lot of unsubmitiveness even now, a lot to be overcome in us even as His Church, His wife, a lot to be done in us; but we seek that that shall be accomplished. We yield and we want to yield, and we want to come to the place where there is



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no more question at all: where it is utter, unquestioning yieldedness to Him Who has not only captured but captivated us completely: and that is

the marriage supper of the Lamb, as I understand it. It is a spiritual thing—the consummation of a legal relationship.

T. A-S.

## FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

### WHITE ELEPHANTS

THERE was once a Siamese gentleman who was given a present. It was a very unusual gift and one which anybody might be proud to have. A friend sent him a young white elephant. Now to have an elephant at all seemed to him great riches, but a white one was just too wonderful. How pleased he was, and how ready to boast of it to all his friends!

Of course it was quite a costly pet. He had to build a large shed in which it could live. He also had to keep on bringing food for it and, as everybody knows, elephants have very big appetites. For the first few weeks, however, this did not seem to matter. He cheerfully paid all the bills for the care and upkeep of his white elephant, and never tired of asking his friends round, so that they could admire the elephant's size and beauty.

Not being a very rich man, he soon began to feel that he was spending too much on his pet. He found that he was rapidly growing poorer and poorer. He could not buy any more new clothes for his family or for himself; he could not even afford the good food which they needed, for all his money was going to pay for the elephant's meals. If ever the animal did not have enough to eat, he made such a fuss and such a noise, that there was no peace until he was given his food.

It was then that the owner had an idea. Why not make the elephant work for his dinner? Indeed he might even earn some profit for his master. Elephants are very clever, and they are strong too; they often work, especially lifting and carrying heavy weights. The white elephant must go to work! So he called a timber merchant from the forest, and offered to hire out his elephant to move and carry fallen trees. The merchant was very glad, and soon began to discuss all the details of the work, the hours and the wages. When all was agreed, they both went off to look at the elephant. But they both had a very great disappointment. The elephant was white! "And I should have thought that you would have known", said the merchant. "that white elephants are sacred. They must never do any work at all."

Oh dear! The poor owner was no better off. Indeed he was worse off, for the elephant was growing bigger and bigger, and was always needing more food. The man and his wife talked it over, finding that there seemed to be only one thing to do if they were not to be wholly ruined. They must have the elephant put to sleep. It seemed a pity to part with him, particularly after the way in which they had boasted to all their friends, but they knew that there was no other way. They called in a man who knew all about killing animals, and asked him please to hurry up and kill theirs. The man would not hurry; in fact he talked a lot and made them pay a heavy fee, but at last it was all agreed, so he went away to the shed to finish his sad task.

But no, white elephants cannot be got rid of as easily as that! The man returned without having killed it. He explained that although he knew that it was an elephant which he had undertaken to put to sleep, he had no idea that it was a white one. Of course they must understand that this was quite impossible. White elephants, being sacred, must never be killed. He dare not do it for all the money in the world.

This was really dreadful. The elephant which at first had seemed such a wonderful gift, was proving to be an absolute calamity. They could not use it, nor could they get rid of it; it was spoiling their lives, making them very poor and most unhappy. It was very clear now that the man who had first made the gift was not their friend at all, but a very cruel and crafty enemy, who had tricked them. They ought to have refused the present, for it had made them poor and not rich, and had brought much sorrow with it.

We are not told what was the end of this story. We do not even know whether it ever really happened. It is often told, though, to explain why we use the term 'White elephant' for presents which are more nuisance than they are worth. At first they seem to be so grand, they appeal to our pride or to our greedy hearts, but we shall live to regret that we were ever so foolish as to receive them.

So often the gifts which this world offers us are

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really 'white elephants'. Sinful things seem at first to make us rich; they appear to be so nice and so worth having, but they are tricks to rob us of true joy and peace; in the end they only bring sorrow and poverty. Only the good gifts which we receive from our heavenly Father are sure to be free from such sad disappointments. "The bless-

ing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow therewith" (Proverbs x. 22).

Do not let us be deceived, then, by the world and its prizes. Above all let us realise that God's greatest gift to us is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. We shall never, never regret receiving Him into our hearts and lives. H. F.

## A MAN IN THE GLORY

*Reading: Hebrews ii. 5-12.*

THIS portion of the Scriptures is a condensation of all that the Bible, and especially the New Testament, is about. It is a strange thing to say, yet it is quite true, that at this late hour in the New Testament dispensation our greatest need, as the people of God, is to know what we have come into, what Christ means, and what we, as the Lord's people, are called unto.

## THE NEED OF ASSURANCE

That need has several aspects. You will. I am quite sure, agree that one aspect of our need is that of assurance, of confidence, of being settled, rooted, grounded with an unwavering hope. We all have need of being so confirmed in the faith, so established, that we are not easily shaken in our minds nor moved in our confidence. That need is present with us, and that need, I think, is going to be felt more and more, as things become increasingly difficult—the need for the Lord's people in this world to be established and fully assured. There is need of strength, real strength, amongst the Lord's people, deliverance from weakness, from feebleness, so that they can go on, make progress, and really grow, for where there is uncertainty, where there is weakness, then there will be slowness of progress, then there will be real limitation in spiritual development.

## THE NEED OF UNDERSTANDING

Further, there is the great need of understanding, especially understanding of God's ways and God's dealings with His people, to know why the Lord deals with them and with us as He does, to have the meaning of the Lord's ways and the Lord's works which are so strange and often so difficult for us to understand. These are aspects of the great need which we all feel.

THE MEANING OF THE INCARNATION  
THE ANSWER TO ALL OUR NEED

This passage of Scripture, as I have said, is a condensed statement of that which goes to the very heart of that need. It brings us to the infinite wonder and mystery of the incarnation. If we could grasp the meaning of the incarnation, God manifest in the flesh, we should have an answer to all our questions, and all our many-sided need would be met.

Notice this twofold "not". "For NOT unto angels did he subject the world to come" (verse 5), and "verily NOT of angels doth he take hold" (verse 16, A.R.V. margin), "but he taketh hold of the seed of Abraham". "Not unto angels", "not of angels". The first is not angels, but man. What is man? The second, not of angels but of the seed of Abraham. Man—that is humanity; the seed of Abraham—that is covenant love, love in covenant. You look in your margin and you probably find a reference, taking you back to the Old Testament, about the seed of Abraham (II Chron. xx. 7; Isa. xli. 8), and you find the immediate context is 'Abraham, the friend of God'—of the seed of Abraham, the friend of God—God's covenant love. That is the direction in which this wonderful mystery of the incarnation lies, in the direction of man, of humanity, and in the direction of man brought into the covenant love of God.

Here the upshot, the issue, the grand climax of this whole paragraph is—"We behold . . . Jesus". Oh, the music of that Name—for we are permitted in the right connection to use that name by itself. I know the modern school drops all the other titles, speaks not of Jesus Christ or the Lord Jesus, but is always talking about 'Jesus', making Him one amongst many, though perhaps somewhat better than other men; and that of course is evil. But here and there in the New Testament we have this name used by itself, and rightly so. "We behold . . . Jesus . . . crowned with glory and hon-

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our". Jesus is the name of Him who emptied Himself, of Him who became man, who took our humanity, a body like our body, a soul like our souls. He took our manhood—He, Jesus, crowned with glory and honour—to bring to glory and honour our humanity, our manhood. That is the heart of Christianity.

Consider our humanity: let us look at ourselves, take account of ourselves, what we are as human beings; these bodies, at best, at worst; these souls—an everlasting trouble. Yes, our humanity: what a thing it is! Those of us who have come into touch with the enlightening Spirit of God in any real way have nothing to say for our humanity. We would be more inclined to apologize for *being* at all. And He has taken hold of our humanity to bring it to the place where it is crowned with glory and honour. That is redemption. That is why the passage goes back to the very first. "*Thou didst set him over the works of thy hands.*" "*Thou crownedst him with glory and honour*"—potentially declared. "*Thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet.*" That was man's creational purpose, but he failed of it, missed it all, and became the humanity that we know him to be. And there came from heaven One who took hold of that humanity and took it through all its trials, all its temptations, all its pressures and its stresses, through all its opposition and its antagonisms, through all the full force that came to bear upon it for its destruction. He took that humanity through it all, perfected it, took it to glory—our humanity, your humanity and mine, this troublesome thing, and made it fit to abide the very presence of the infinitely holy and glorious God. That was indeed "bringing many sons unto glory".

The Bible is full of that in figure, in portrait—the union of the Divine with the human. You have it in the figure of the Cherubim, and in the figure of the Ark of the Testimony—the wood, the common wood of the desert, overlaid with the gold. You have it right through. God is testifying—for this is the ark of *testimony*—testifying that from glory He has laid hold on humanity and is going to bring it through into the Most Holy Place where it is to abide for ever. The last picture of the ark of the testimony is in that Holy Place in the Temple, when they drew out the staves. It is there for ever in the presence of God. Its journey has ended. It is crowned with glory and honour—Christ and you and I in union in the presence of God. I say, that is the heart of everything, and if you and I need, as I have said, assurance and confidence, re-

member that God has entered into covenant love with us to do this. Do we want anything to give us greater and deeper assurance and confidence and hope than this, that God has entered into covenant love?

Every time we gather at His Table and partake of the symbols, we are entering into the meaning of that covenant love, as the seed of Abraham. What a mighty covenant is in that Blood! What a mighty covenant in that body of the Lord Jesus! We are made partakers of His flesh, of His bone, of His very life. This is covenant love. What assurance that should bring to us, what strength for progress—for if we have not that assurance and hope, how slow we are to go on; how difficult it is to maintain a going-on position and course. We may take a step forward—and then there enter in thoughts about ourselves, some accusation from our own hearts: the enemy comes because of some thing that is in us, and we find ourselves two steps backward. A little on, and then a rest, and then back where we were, because of uncertainty springing from the humanity that we are.

#### JESUS IN GLORY OUR CONFIDENCE

The absolute strength of certainty to keep going on is in our faith hold on the humanity that is in heaven. "*We behold*". You see, this letter eventually arrives there. There are all those who have run this race of faith, and they were weak men many of them. They are not the pick of the world's best in themselves. The story of their failures and of being men of like passions with ourselves is not covered up by the Lord; it is fully exposed; but they have run the race. And then it says, "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus"—"crowned with glory and honour": the guarantee that we will be there crowned with glory and honour through faith in Him. You can have as little faith in yourself as you like, perhaps the less the better, but do not stay there with your no faith in yourself. Your strength to go on is in looking off from yourself unto "Jesus . . . crowned with glory and honour". Does it convey something to you, that here is a man tempted and tried, as we have been, through the fires of antagonism and evil that were always seeking to scorch Him, to mar Him? He got through. He triumphed, "crowned with glory and honour". Did He do it for Himself? No, He did it for us, as us. Our strength to go on is in looking off.



## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

THE EXPLANATION OF GOD'S WAYS  
WITH US

And as for God's ways with us, His strange ways, His sometimes seemingly hard ways. What about understanding all these? There is the explanation—"crowned with glory and honour", "conformed to the image of His Son". We are going through the fires: we are being tried, tested, up to the hilt: we are really having a difficult time in the hands of God. But what is it doing? Well, sometimes it seems that the fires are just making manifest all that is bad in us, as it comes to the surface. But look again into the crucible. That scum, that dross, is on the surface, it has come to the surface all right. But what is underneath? The gold is underneath. We see what is on the surface; it is the things that are seen that we take note of—but God is doing something deep down. It would not be for our good to know all that God is doing deep down. We should, in our poor humanity, at once become spiritually proud. The last thing for our good is that. But He is doing something deep down underneath. He is refining the gold, even if we are more conscious of the surface dross than of anything else. He is going to crown us with glory and honour, that we should be held in honour before God. That is a mystery, but we have to accept it.

Jesus has actually taken our human nature and has carried it through into the presence of God, and it is there through all testing and difficulty and adversity. It is exalted. Our humanity is already exalted in the presence of God to glory and hon-

our, and He, being there, is the pledge that, whereas the presence of God would be our utter destruction, we are going to abide the presence of God without destruction. He is the pledge of that.

## THE NEED FOR OBJECTIVE FAITH

I close with this. If you have lost it, if you are in danger of losing it, or if you have never yet adequately grasped it, lay hold on your great objective faith. You may have become so subjective in your faith, in your doctrine, that you are wholly occupied with what is inside yourself, and that is a devastating thing. You never have any encouragement or hope along that line. May the Lord recover our balance between objective and subjective truth, and restore to us the full balance of this great fact, this glorious fact, without which all the subjective will be for our undoing. There is One in the glory who, tempted in all points like as we, sin apart, took our humanity through the fires, far keener and more intense fires than we know anything about. He is there as us—the pledge that we are going to be there. To me it is wonderful. This is the Gospel, this is the substance, the essence, the heart of Christianity. The incarnation is the very core of Christianity. Oh yes, we are not going, the longer we live, to have a better opinion of ourselves, to begin to be able to congratulate ourselves. It is going to be worse and worse along that line, but the counter to it all is "*Christ in you, the hope of glory*"—"crowned with glory and honour".

T. A-S.

## THE FRUIT OF HIS TRAVAIL

*Reading: Isaiah liii. 10 - 11; Psalm xxii. 22 - 31.*

IN this passage in Isaiah, we get those words concerning the suffering, the Cross, of our Lord Jesus—"When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed"; then that is enlarged further—"he shall prolong his days"; and finally we read in the 11th verse—"He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied". The question which arises from this tremendous passage, this tremendous statement, is—What, after all, is it that will satisfy the Lord as the fruit of what He has endured? There is no doubt about it that the cost has been tremendous. We have only to read Isaiah liii: the whole of that experience is

called "the travail of his soul". This is a vital matter—the question to what end, after all, did He endure so much, why did He go through it all? Such suffering must have an adequate fruitage; there must be that which comes out of what the Lord went through to justify it. Here, for our great encouragement, we read, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied". There is an end when it will be glory, when the Lord will be satisfied.

But, while, as in every other matter of the Word of God, there is an ultimate realisation, an eternal realisation, there is also a present or a spiritual realisation before the end comes. There is a great peril amongst Christians of relegating everything to

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heaven; but the point is that the battle is here, and there are many things that ought to be operating here. That is what the Church is here for—to be the demonstration of heavenly things that one day will be eternal, so that God is able to point to the Church and say, 'Look at them! It is happening now, they have glory now, there is glory in the Church now'. Is all the Lord's satisfaction to be withheld until the end is reached? Is the Lord never to have anything here and now that delights His heart? Surely there ought to be that which here and now brings joy to His heart: so that He is able to look upon it and say, 'This is what I have been wanting'. He should even be able to look at *us* sometimes and say, 'This is what I wanted'. The Lord wants to be satisfied *now*. "He shall see . . . and be satisfied". And we need to be very exercised about this matter.

What is it that the Lord gave Himself for, that was so costly? What was the point of the terrific scene in Gethseniane? "Not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke xxii. 42). Well, let us say it straight away—it was unto something very great: not unto something small or partial, but unto something very worth-while. The Lord is never satisfied with half a thing. The Lord wants the full thing, and this raises the great issue of what is the full fruitage of redemption. There are some statements in the Word that tell us. "*To this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord . . .*" (Rom. xiv. 9). He did not die and rise again for partial possession, but that He might be Lord. Everything belongs to Him; His rightful place is Lord. Here we get an explanation of what it is that satisfies Him.

#### SATISFACTION IN A SEED

"He shall see his seed." Satisfaction, first of all, in a seed. Notice it says "*his seed*". In Psalm xxii, which is again the travail of His soul because it is the psalm of the Cross, we find the same expression used—"a seed" (vs. 30). "*A seed shall serve him*"; out of His travail, in other words, there will be a seed or a generation who shall serve Him. And earlier in that passage, we find that He uses those words—"I will declare thy name unto my brethren" (vs. 22). In Hebrews ii, where that passage is quoted, the Lord uses the words—"For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren", but a little further on another Scripture is quoted which says, "*I and the children whom God hath given me*" (vs. 13). "*As the Father hath*

*life in himself, even so gave he to the Son also to have life in himself*" (John v. 26); and "*the Son . . . giveth life to whom he will*" (John v. 21).

There is a very great word used about the Son of God, particularly in John's writings—"the only begotten". "*We beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father*" (John i. 14). "*No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son (one reading says 'God only begotten') . . . he hath declared him*" (John i. 18). That word 'only begotten' means that He is the unique One in that He derives His life from God Himself. He is unique as the only One directly deriving life from God. The eternal God is in the Son. "*In him was life*" (John i. 4).

But the amazing thing is that *He* has a seed and imparts *His* life to those who become joined to Him. He is the life-giving Son of God, and those who become partakers of His nature are His seed. They derive their life, their nature, from Him. The Lord as a fruit of His travail has brought into being a seed. And then it says that He shall see that seed, and there are two things that we need to recognise about the seed.

#### TRAVAIL UNTO FULL GROWTH

First of all, that the impartation of the life of Him who is the Only Begotten is not the end of the process—it is the beginning of it. He puts the seed in in order that the seed may germinate and develop and come to fulness. A child is always intended to be a full-grown man or woman, and what obtains in nature is always an illustration of an eternal reality. We are not satisfied with an undeveloped human life. However small it is, so long as it is developing properly, we are happy; but when development ceases, and ceases for months or years, then it is a serious thing, the life is not moving. The Lord is not satisfied with His seed being merely imparted, though everything begins there.

Do not minimise the coming of the life of God into a human being. That is new birth, that is eternal life; and "they shall never perish". "There shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke xv. 7). Praise the Lord for the millions who have been saved because there is life for a look at the crucified One. New birth is a glorious thing. But the Lord Himself wants something more than that. His own nature is now there as a seed, but He wants to see it. He wants to see the nature coming to development and to full fruition.



## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

We are stupid about spiritual things. If we were planting an orchard, would we be content to put in little plants that never grew, and they were supposed to be fruit trees? Would you bring your friends round and say, 'Look at my dear little fruit trees'? But with many of us it almost amounts to that. The thing has never come to life. The fruit of the Spirit is "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control" (Gal. v. 22). It is the nature of Christ being expressed. It is something that takes a lot of developing; it is the formation of Christ. The Lord is satisfied when He sees Himself reflected, when He sees that He is now beginning to take shape in many sons.

So Hebrews ii says: "*It became him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings*" (vs.10); not 'in bringing many sons into eternal life', but "in bringing many sons unto glory"; and glory is moral glory, it is likeness to Christ. The only glory in us is the measure of Christ—not this wretched person. Glory is the presence of the One within, Who is there that He may increase and grow and develop, until His very features begin to appear in these poor vessels of clay: so that qualities and characteristics and beauties, which just are not in us at all naturally, begin to appear; and that is what the Lord is looking for. 'My seed', seed like that—because seed means nature. He is looking for the nature; He is looking for that which in Himself finds its fulness, manifested and brought through into actual expression in redeemed lives. The Lord's satisfaction with a seed is found not only where the life is implanted, but where it is increased and comes to expression.

We could spend much time on the great secret of that increase of Christ. There is a New Testament Scripture that bears right on this matter—Galatians iv. 19. Paul, who has been used to bring into being a nucleus of believers called 'the churches in Galatia', says to these Christians, these saved people, "*I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you*". "*Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now perfected in the flesh?*" (Gal. iii. 3). 'Having started in the power of that new God-given life, are you now going on in the energy of this same old one that you had before? You have a tradition, you have doctrines that you hold on to, you observe days and years—you are trying to be pleasing to God by doing things. That is all a dropping out of the realm of this new life which has made you sons

of God; you have become withered, you have become babes again; and now I am in travail until Christ is formed in you.' Travail unto the full measure of Christ—that is the first thing.

## THE WAY OF GROWTH

The second great matter here is that not only is the seed a life imparted that it may come to fulness, but that fulness never comes without a basic work being done in the life. Paul touches on that in Galatians. He says, "*Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh*" (Gal. v. 16). We have the corollary of this in Romans viii. 13: "if ye live after the flesh, ye must die". If you ask, How can I live in the realm where Christ increasingly becomes my life?—the answer is: "*They that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof*" (Gal. v. 24). Only if we have repudiated the old natural basis of life and said, 'I have finished with it, I want it to be no longer I but Christ', only if we have decided that it must be Christ, can it so be. Do you want it to be you or the Lord? You have to make up your mind. The Lord says, "If any man would come after me" the first thing he will have to do is to "deny himself" (Matt. xvi. 24). The word 'deny' in the Greek is a deliberate and final repudiation of self. Baptism declares that; but baptism does not end the process, rather does it begin it—because from that crisis, what happens? Then all that is not Christ in us begins to come to light, bit by bit. You say, I did not know it would mean that! Then crisis follows crisis. But if you have wholly committed yourself, then there will be that further word of the Lord: "let him deny himself, and take up his cross"—in one case it says "daily" (Luke ix. 23). As far as self is concerned, the way of the Cross is the only way of the increase of Christ. 'Not I, but Christ.'

But that has to be a heart matter settled secretly with the Lord. When a child of God settles that with the Lord, the Lord's mighty hand closes on him. He says, 'I will see you through'. How blessed it is to see children of God who come up to crisis after crisis; perhaps you see them meet the crisis, and you can tell from their faces what they are going through, it may be for two or three days, and then life breaks, and they seem more gentle. You have some fellowship with them: they say, 'Praise the Lord, that is done'! With those who mean business, it is remarkable how often that comes, and how quickly they grow. You do not

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have to engineer your own crises—the Lord does it. The Cross is the only way for Him to “see . . . and be satisfied”. Can the Lord be satisfied with the carnal Christian—with someone full of their own importance, going their own way? Does heaven look down and say—‘That satisfies God’? It is nonsense! The Lord is looking for something quite different. He is looking for the ruling out of that, that His Son may come into view.

### THE SEED IS THE CHURCH

But the further meaning of this seed, I believe, is that it is a corporate term. The Lord has not died and risen again merely with individuals in view, though it begins with individuals; but as we come into Christ, we become His seed, a kind of person—many persons, of course, but of a certain kind—and in that kind of person the mere persons begin to be very much at a discount. It does not mean that personalities and individuals are ruled out, but they become something more than just a lot of units: and that brings us to that word in Galatians iii. 16, where Paul is speaking about Abraham’s seed. “*He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.*” Christ Himself is, of course, the seed of God, the Only Begotten, but in Christ we become a seed or a generation which is Christ corporate. What we are naturally is all under judgment at the Cross and ruled out. God is only seeing a new creation altogether, where He sees but one person—His beloved Son: one Christ, and every one of us in Christ.

Therefore the fruit of the Cross is not just individual salvation. The fruit of the Cross is the Church. The fruit of the Cross is a very big thing: it is *oneness*. Will you look at Galatians iii. 26 - 29: “*For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye all are one man in Christ Jesus. And if ye are Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, heirs according to promise.*” As individuals, each with our background, our opinions, our personal angle on things, which seem so real to us—if I am a Jew, well, I see everything Jewishly, and if I am a Greek, I cannot abide Jews, and therefore I see everything Greekishly. But then there is a grave, and we say, ‘Lord, I want it to be You and not me’, and there is resurrection on the other side. The Jew says, ‘I want it to be You and

not me’; there is resurrection on that side. How many Jews and Greeks are there over there? You cannot find one; there is nobody there at all except Christ.

So you go down into death as an individual, but you come up as part of a whole. There is only one Christ, Christ and His members, and that is the Church. The Church is Christ as the life and the realm of His people. The Church is not a lot of people. It is one new man, and the only way to know the Church is through death and resurrection. You have got to go right out of the picture, or you will never know what the Church is; because it is not on this side—it is on that other side. There may be religion on this side, but it is not the Church. The Church is on that side, and it is just Christ. It is not a thing, an organization; it is a life in union with the living Lord and vital union with one another. We feel for one another, we care for one another. How the whole physical body hurries to the aid of the foot that is damaged, or anything else. How insensitive we can be to one another, how terribly self-occupied and self-centred. The Lord wants to deliver us from that and bring us on to a new ground where we ‘love one another from the heart fervently’, where we really care what happens to one another.

That brings us to what I believe is the key to what was in the Lord’s heart as He faced the Cross. I do not know where you think John xvii took place. It looks as though it took place in the upper room, because chapter xviii tells us that afterward they went into the garden, but it all seems bound up with Gethsemane. I do not know whether He prayed it in Gethsemane, but He prayed it within minutes or hours of Gethsemane. It was the same night, and more than once in John xvii the Lord uses the actual words “I pray . . .” When He is facing the greatest issue that has ever been faced. He pours out His heart to His Father. This is, so to speak, the Holy of Holies. You could not have a greater opening of His heart really than John xvii. He is letting us into His secret. What an extraordinary thing for those men to have been there in His presence when He so prayed!

What does He pray for—the Saviour of the world, the One Who is going to the Cross as the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world? “*I pray for them; I pray not for the world*”—is that not extraordinary?—“*I pray . . . for those whom thou hast given me*” (John xvii. 9). And what is the heart of His burden for those who are His children? His one heart cry to His Father for

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

His seed, His own (' they are mine ', He says, ' for they are Thine '). is " *that they may be one, as we are one* " (John xvii. 11). The Lord's burden is—not that people may exist spiritually, but that they may be one ; not that they may be brought to the birth, but that, having been brought to birth, they shall be brought into oneness. The full fruitage of redemption is not merely their salvation. The Lord is not satisfied with countless saved souls. Saved souls can be a perfect travesty and a contradiction of everything. Some Christians are doing the most grievous harm, but you cannot say they are not saved. We have spoken to a Roman Catholic who was in the employ of a professing Christian. He says—' Well, I am sorry, I know too much. ' And your tongue is tied because sometimes you know things yourself—injustice, wickedness, lying—yes, but the man is saved. God's great issue is not only our standing in Christ but our spiritual state. We have a glorious standing in Christ, but the state is a very serious matter. There is no testimony by standing ; the testimony is by the state. It is not until something happens inwardly in the life that there is any testimony. Just being a Christian does not necessarily make you a witness.

Then there is one further thing. The travail of His soul requires something more than individual spirituality. You can as it were beget a lot of semi-spiritual people, because they have had the teaching and they have heard about the Cross ; they are, as it were, going on with the Lord all by themselves, but there is very little impact in an unrelated, isolated spiritual individual. A ministry can so easily produce individuals, and the tragedy is that so often these individuals, if you meet them aside, fall into one of two categories. Either they think they have something a bit better than other people, therefore they cannot help feeling a bit critical of other people, and other Christians can smell their critical spirit miles off, and so are not interested—and so that testimony has gone out. Or, at the other extreme, they are going through such a time, because they are trying to go on with the Lord, that they are nearly always ' under the weather '—in other words, they are always having spiritual problems because they have heard this deeper thing and it has got them tied up. Even if you get quite a measure of spiritual life in a child of God as an isolated unit, and they go on faithfully and seek to be true to the Lord, the weight of things proves too much for them, and the more real they are, the more the weight of it is on them. They are nearly crushed out of existence. The Lord has an-

other way, and the Lord's way is the Body—one life together, oneness. " That they may be one. "

## THE WORK OF THE CROSS

The Cross has done a mighty thing. If we could see what the Cross has really done, we would all stand up and say, Hallelujah ! It is tremendous, it is a mighty deliverance. It has taken away the whole sin of the world—yes ; but that is not all, though that is big enough. When you and I had our sins forgiven, I wonder how many of us, after a little time, ran into a ' sticky patch ' ? I did ; I am sure most of you did. We discover that, although we have a new nature through new birth, unfortunately we also have another nature still there. " The flesh lusteth against the Spirit " (Gal. v. 17). We still have this other nature.

That constitutes the next battle for the child of God. To begin with, the Holy Spirit, as it were, does not talk about this ; He just gives the joy of salvation. But after a bit there is the discovery of the need of something deeper. What is the final solution to a defeated Christian life? It is the end of Romans vii—" *I thank God through Jesus Christ* ", and he thanks God because what is in Romans vi has been realised. " *Our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin ; for he that hath died is justified (released) from sin* " (vs. 6, 7). And the revelation of the Spirit comes as to the further meaning of the Cross as deliverance from the power of sin.

The next thing is that the Cross begins to deal with the self-life itself, and we run into a deeper discovery of what self is—not actual sins and wickednesses, but motives, a whole world of iniquity which is our self-life ; and the end of it is that the Lord will lead us to a crisis, where we see that the Cross has dealt with that person, that self. Paul tells us in Romans vi that the old man is crucified, and in Galatians ii. 20 he says, " I have been crucified with Christ . . . no longer I . . . but Christ ". So the Cross is our deliverance from that.

But the deepest thing is that the work of the fall was undone by the Lord Jesus. Redemption was an adequate thing. He was manifested to destroy the works of the devil (I John iii. 8). Now, one thing that was injected into the human race was enmity against God. The enmity between man and God was dealt with at the Cross ; we who were once enemies were reconciled, and there is peace with God. But the fall has always brought enmity



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between man and man ; between each one of us and every other one there is an enmity. If we had to live with one other long enough and uncomfortably enough, trouble would soon blow up. There is something that is "I", and it is irritating. Well, the Cross has slain that enmity—of course, in the Lord Jesus—but that is our refuge. Our refuge is the Cross, and Ephesians ii touches that very matter. It says, "That he might create in himself of the two one new man", "having slain the enmity thereby" (vs. 16, 17). The Lord is not satisfied with a lot of warring units. It is a travesty to think of having peace with God upwards while there is war between His children down here. The Lord says, I want to get among you all and clear that away, so that you become one. And the proof that the Cross has done its work is the oneness that is in Christ.

#### A PRACTICAL EXPRESSION

Now, this is not just theory: it is the thing that the Lord longs for. "I pray for them . . . that they may be one", and our first exercise must be to commit ourselves to the Lord's will in this matter. He may touch actual points where there is not absolute oneness. That is a practical issue that we have to face. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar" (I John iv. 20). The proof that we are right with God is that we are right with one another. We are living in tremendous, terrific, days: every man of the world you talk to admits it. But, in the midst of all the chaos, the Lord has an answer. How encouraging that in Isaiah it says, "*Darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon thee*" (Isa. lx. 2). As the darkness deepens, the Church is the answer, and that means corporate life. "*Where two or three are gathered together in*

*my name, there am I in the midst of them*" (Matt. xviii. 20). It does not mean two or three in a room; it means two or three who have been made one, who have been through the fires of the Cross until they are one and you cannot get a wedge between them; Christ has done something. And love is not sentiment—it is a miracle. You have to love people with whom you could not get on naturally. The Cross has to deal with that life, that the life of Jesus may be manifest; and it is one life. The Lord says, If even two of you are one, you can have anything you like. It is an immense thing to get two people really one.

What, then, is the answer to the day in which we live? It is the Church; it is Christ corporate; it is the 'togetherness in Christ', at all costs, of the saints. "*We ought to lay down our lives*" (I John iii. 16). It is the losing of that natural independent self-life, whatever it costs, in the place where we live, in order that the Church may be built. The churches are the expressions of Christ in His people, and that is what matters. There needs to be a closely related practical life in Christ to make this effectual. In other words, the Church has to be built. There has to be a knitting of member to member in order that the Lord's presence may be known. The Lord is not just present, in an indefinite way, in the middle of a room where the saints are. He is in saints who are *one*. The key to the whole situation in the earth is this matter of oneness in the saints, and I believe that it needs practical expression.

"I pray for them . . . that they may be one." The travail of His soul will not be satisfied until He finds something of His own likeness reflected in us, and that reflection requires our being close together. We must "grow up in all things into him, who is the head, even Christ", but we cannot grow separately.

C. J. B. H.

#### "FOR THE GLORY OF GOD"

"*This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby*" (John xi. 4).

"*He that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go*" (John xi. 44).

"*But the chief priests took counsel that they might put Lazarus also to death; because that by reason*

*of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus*" (John xii. 10-11).

WE know quite well, but it may be as well if we remind ourselves, that in this Gospel there is brought out the one thing which governs all the interests and activities of God—namely, His glory, and His glory in the face of Jesus Christ: so that the one thing in view, giving meaning to everything,

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is the glory of God through the Lord Jesus. Let us keep that in mind, because if we detach anything from that we lose both its meaning and value, and probably lose our way. God is doing everything for His glory, and that particularly in the lives of those who are His.

## GOD'S GLORY MANIFESTED AGAINST A BACKGROUND OF SUFFERING

Let us now come to the first of these three fragments in this wonderful illustration. "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God". The statement is the explanation and the interpretation of a very mysterious providence, a providence which lifts things which otherwise could be regarded as the common happenings in human life on to another level, and clothes them with majesty, with glory. It is not an uncommon thing that a man should be taken ill and die, and there are literally countless things which just happen like that, making up the sum of human life and experience, every one of which can be regarded as the common lot, the everyday experience; but here is something which, by the illumination of the Lord, has to be seen in another way—and another way which almost startles us. It is that the sovereignty of God, moving toward that great object of His own glory in His Son, acts to make a man ill, to bring sickness upon a man; and providence stands back and lets that sickness take its course, until the man dies and is more than dead, and all the features of an earthly human tragedy are there, of bereavement, of sorrow and heartbreak. They are all there—and yet God is in this thing, involved and implicated by His own act in a most remarkable way, and it is made known that this thing was determined by God Himself with a tremendous object in view, the greatest object in the heart of God—His own glory.

Now you see the far-reaching possibilities of such a consideration, and the tremendous range of application. We shall be content just now to take the fact that when God is seeking to glorify Himself, to bring His Son into His rightful place of recognition, of Lordship, those things which we may naturally regard and interpret as the haps and chances of human life, to which all are subject, may be something predestined of God, under God's control, to bring out something greatly to the glory of God, to God's satisfaction.

Now, friends, this is something to which you and I have to seek quite diligently to adjust ourselves.

Let us widen and enlarge the application from just human indisposition or sickness, even if it does culminate in death. Let us view in the light of this perhaps a lifetime of difficulty and adversity and suffering, perhaps something that has come to us for which we have more than thrice sought the Lord that it might be removed, and the Lord has in effect said, 'No': there has been no removal; it is something that we are called upon to experience and endure. It may be something in our lives as a whole, or it may be some event in our lives of great distress. Oh, look at it, whatever it may be in your case that you would have removed, to which you would take the attitude that Mary and Martha took—This is a tragedy, this is a misfortune, this is a great adversity, this is an overwhelming sorrow, this is all against us, all contrary to our good and to our blessing and to our joy. The Word of God makes it clear in more than one place that there is a sovereignty behind the lives of His own, "the called according to His purpose", which may have not just let that thing happen, but actually ordained it, and made that very thing, ordered by the will of God, the means by which something should come from our lives very much to the glory of God. I know that it is not easy to take that attitude toward things when you are in them—it is the most difficult thing; but here is something which is concrete as a statement, and it says in a general way to us, "to them that love God . . . that are called according to his purpose" (Romans viii. 28): 'You who love the Lord, there is some tremendous possibility for the Lord's glory, the Lord's satisfaction, wrapped up in that which you are inclined to regard as a trouble, suffering, adversity, a setback, a tragedy, if not a catastrophe, a strange and mysterious providence which has reversed your hopes and expectations—all that and much more. That may be something that the Lord has not only allowed to take place, but has arranged Himself.' In the end, of course, we recognise that and acknowledge it, and we shall not be sorry that we went through that thing. I do not think Mary and Martha were sorry afterwards that they went through it. I think there was tremendous gain there, but the point is that in the lives of those who love the Lord there is in suffering something for God's glory, and if our hearts are set upon His glory, we shall share it. "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him" (Rom. viii. 17).

That is just the first brief but quite real message to us, and it must be taken by every one of us ac-



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ording to our own hearts' secret bitterness and sorrow. You know the Lord has dealt with you in a strange way, upset all your plans, suspended all your expectations, reversed all your hopes, brought everything to a standstill, whatever it might be. Now "this sickness is not unto death". If Christ, the Resurrection and the Life, is involved in this, it is unto life; it cannot be unto death, but for the glory of God.

#### MANIFESTED GLORY LIMITED BY AN EARTH TOUCH

The second passage—"Jesus saith . . . Loose him, and let him go". Do not forget that the glory of God is still governing, though that glory may be partially under arrest. The glory of God is found in the uncreated life of God, or the risen life of Christ, the life of the One who is the Resurrection and the Life. The glory is inherent in that Divine eternal life. Lazarus has got to the point where he has the life, it is in him, he has come forth in the power of that resurrection life, but it is in limitation; therefore the glory is in limitation, and the full realisation of the Divine intention, the full display of glory, requires that that life shall be loosed, shall be freed. From what? We say, Grave-clothes. What are the grave-clothes? Well, "dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. iii. 19). The grave-clothes are just the 'earth touch'. That is a very very full phrase. It is some link with old mother Earth, it is some still remaining tie with that cursed creation where nothing can go right through to fulness. Here it is the question of fulness of life, full release and resultant full glory; and, in any realm where the curse still rests, we know that the mark of the curse is that things go so far and then they fade out, die away, nothing really comes right through to fulness.

Here is Lazarus; he has got so far—but what is the good of this man tied hand and foot? even though he has life, he cannot do very much, he cannot be of much use. He is not going to walk about and display the glory of God as a living corpse, always speaking of the grave—his one testimony being, even though he has life, the grave. He speaks of the grave, bears marks of the grave on him all the time—there is an earth touch. You see the comprehensiveness of application. We have to learn under the instruction of the Holy Spirit what and where is the earth touch in our case. It may be some ambition, natural ambition, some person-

al craving, something that we ourselves want for our own satisfaction. It may be any one of a thousand things that is still an earth touch, that means that we are not completely released for God, we are not really free for the Lord, still some ground of controversy, still some ground of bargaining with the Lord—If You will do this, then I will . . . There is still some earth touch somewhere, some bit of worldliness—oh, anything that touches that earth realm; and therefore, although we may have this wonderful life and have heard the call of the Son of God, we are still in limitation, still in straitness, still tied up, still not absolutely free and emancipated that the glory of God should be served in fulness. "Loose him, and let him go"; cut the earth ties.

I know, of course, that there is the dispensational outworking of this thing and that these grave-clothes dispensationally speak of the law, the Jewish law, because it is here, right in the midst of Judaism, that the testimony is borne. This is Galatians. The whole letter to the Galatians is in the words "Loose him, and let him go". Get rid of the legalism of the law and let this raised man go free. But there is a spiritual interpretation, and it is a wider one. There is this more extensive application, and the principle is universal—have an earth touch, and your life comes under arrest, the glory of God is limited. What is your earth touch? Well, let us ask ourselves, are we free? are we really living in the fulness of this life and the effectiveness of this life in service? If not, why not? Are we still clinging to something for ourselves, still holding on somewhere to that which is banned by God, which cannot live? It is the death touch because it is the earth touch. The word is: "Loose him, and let him go".

#### SATAN'S OPPOSITION TO THE MANIFESTATION OF THE GLORY

And the third passage—"the chief priests took counsel that they might put Lazarus also to death; because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus". Anything that is in the full way of the glory of God, loosed for Divine purpose that God may be glorified in it, becomes the object of Satan's malice. That is a third truth, which perhaps we need not emphasize, for we know it well, that if God does something in our lives out of which He gets glory to Himself through His Son, it is not long before the hate and spite of the enemy is directed against us. That is a

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part of our fellowship with the Lord. If they are going to put Jesus to death, they are going to put Lazarus to death as well, because these two are one. We are bound up with the Lord in this, and we shall find that if the Lord is after getting glory in and through our lives, and yet more glory, then the enemy will make us the targets of his real venom and he and his will take counsel to put us to death.

But how far can he go? He cannot go any further at any time than the Lord of Life permits him to go, because now His Son has been offered at Calvary, and for us it is our privilege, not to be killed, but to lay down our lives of our own free will.

Well, three things—"not unto death, but for the

glory of God". What is it that you and I are wrestling with? See in it the possibility of Divine glory; it may be something ordained of God—tragic as it seems to you—ordained of God to be in the long run for His glory. Get free from that which limits the glory and frustrates the purpose of God in your adversity and trial—that is, any earth touch, any personal clinging; and remember that, even when you have done that, you are not going to escape the attention of the enemy—you are going to be an object of his consideration; and if the devil thinks anyone or anything is worth his consideration, it must be of value to the Lord.

T. A-S.

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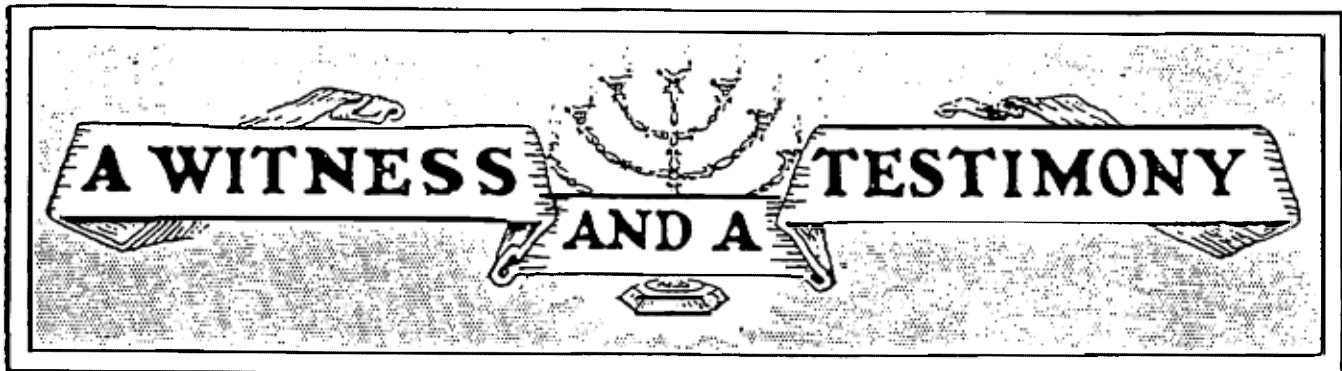
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SPECIAL NOTICE.

As Mr. and Mrs. TAYLOR, who have been in charge of the Guest House at Honor Oak, will probably be away from January to June visiting India, will those desiring accommodation for the Conferences at Easter or Whitsun, or at any other time, please write to:—

The Conference Secretary, 13, Honor Oak Road. Forest Hill. London, S.E. 23.



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## UNION WITH CHRIST

(continued)

### V. FUNCTIONAL UNION

"For even as we have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office: so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another" (Rom. xii. 4, 5).

"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; it is not therefore not of the body. And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; it is not therefore not of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members each one of them in the body, even as it pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now they are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee: or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary: and those parts of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness; whereas our comely parts have no need: but God tempered the body to-

gether, giving more abundant honour to that part which lacked; that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffereth, all the members suffer with it; or one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and severally members thereof" (1 Cor. xii. 12-27).

"... his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians i. 23).

"that he . . . might reconcile them both in one body unto God" (Ephesians ii. 15, 16).

"... for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ" (Ephesians iv. 12).

"Christ . . . from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth . . . maketh . . . increase" (Ephesians iv. 15, 16).

"He is the head of the body, the church" (Col. i. 18).

"For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, being himself the saviour of the body" (Ephesians v. 23).

"We are members of his body" (Ephesians v. 30).

**W**E continue with our consideration of this great and many-sided revelation of union with Christ. We come now to the fifth aspect of union with Christ, which we are calling Functional Union: that is, as a body, with head and members.



## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

## INCLUSIVE FUNCTION: EXPRESSING THE PERSONALITY — CHRIST

I am going to begin with the inclusive function of the Body of Christ. That function is the *expressing of the personality* of the Body, which is Christ. The Body of Christ, the Church as the Body of Christ, does not exist for self-expression. It does not exist for any other purpose at all than that of expressing the inward personality, the personality dwelling within the Body, that is, Christ. We never rightly speak of a corpse as a man. We can speak of it as the body of a man, but never as a man. The man is not there. His body may be there. We may, on the other hand, speak of a living body as a man, but we know quite well that the body, even though it is animated, is not the man, or is at most only a small part of him. The body is only the vehicle or vessel for the expression and activity of the man. The real man is what is inside the body.

So it is with the Body of Christ. We discriminate between Himself and His Body and yet we identify them: that is, we identify Him with His Body, and in a sense we identify His Body with Him, and yet there remains that difference. It is important to keep this in mind. Christ is not merged into something called His Body and His own personality lost. He remains the personality of His Body. There may be the framework without the personality, just as there can be the personality without the Body; but—and this is the teaching concerning the Church as His Body—for all practical purposes the two are one. That is, Christ demands His Body, and the Body demands Him. The Body is dominated by Him in order that, according to one passage we have just read, it may be His completeness. "the fulness of him that filleth all in all".

So, then, the Body has as its function two main things. One is to *locate* the person or the personality, to bring Christ where the Body is, so that, where the Body is, there Christ should be. He has decided and chosen so to bind Himself up with His Body, that that Body, the Church, should be the place where He is found; that, in the minimum of representation—two members—it should bring Him into any place, that by it He should be able to come into any location or situation. One purpose of the Body, then, is to locate Christ.

Secondly, its function is to *express* the personality, to be the means, the vessel, wherein and whereby He can express Himself, make Himself known—bring people to see the Lord, to know the Lord, to understand the Lord. That is quite simple, but it is quite challenging.

There are several matters connected with this. Let us look in the first place at some things of relative or secondary account. It is possible to exaggerate the Body. That is sometimes done in the physical, human realm! Such an assertiveness, such an elaboration, such an aggrandisement, such an adornment and decoration of the external, the body, the fabric—to the hiding of the personality—so that the thing which impresses is the form, the pageantry, the external, not the presence of the Lord. It is that which touches the senses of men, so that their sight is taken up and their human natural senses of perception are occupied with the externals of the Church and often with the people themselves making an impression, and the Lord Himself is not to be found. It is possible to exaggerate the body; and apart from that—possibly exaggerated—observation, in many other ways we can bring the *technique* of the Church, of the Body of Christ, how it must be done and so on, so much into view, that all this is occupying the attention instead of the Lord Himself. The very teaching can obscure, if we are not very careful. Unless the Lord, the personality within, transcends all the means employed, then there is something wrong and we had better reconsider our means.

In the next place, it is possible to make the body *artificial*—now I am on very thin ice!—by titivating and decorating and painting. And what is it all about? It is an attempt to create personality where it is felt to be lacking. Forgive me if this makes any reader feel uncomfortable! But that is its underlying object—to make an impression, to carry weight, to give a sense of personality, or to make up some conscious lack. It is possible to be so occupied with this elaboration in connection with the Church in order to make an impression. How much of it, indeed, is already being done by the organized Church, with this object in view. All sorts of things are being put on, taken on, employed, all the paint and gilt and tinsel, all the artificial, in order to try to overcome this sense of a lack of impact, in order to make an impression because the impression is not there naturally; and it is quite possible to make the Body of Christ artificial, and its registration an artificial one, which will wear off unless you put more paint on and still more. You have to keep it going or it will fade out. It has to be done every morning!

On the other hand, it is possible to underestimate and be careless about the body, and that is equally evil. To be careless, slovenly, shabby in your bodily presence dishonours the personality, it takes something from the man, it degrades him.

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That could be applied in many ways. We make the observation as we go on that we must honour the Body of Christ. We are under obligation to keep the Body in respect for the sake of the One who is inside. While I speak, of course, of the fellowship of the Lord's people—the mutual honouring and respecting and helping and trying to elevate the standard of spiritual life; keeping things from becoming spiritually shabby and threadbare and down at heel, it does have—and forgive the somewhat mundane application—it does have an application to our personal presence, as to whether we, as Christians, in our personal appearance are really discrediting our Lord, by carelessness in habits or in dress, in behaviour or manners. These things let the Lord down. As Christians we ought to be far above them. Now I am not suggesting to you that you at once go and begin to elaborate your personal adornments, but I do say that Christ deserves to be honoured by the body and in the body, and it is possible to sin against Christ by carelessness with regard to the body. I would like to follow that more closely in our mutual care of one another—what the Word calls 'provoking one another to good works', and 'washing one another's feet': that is, helping one another to keep from the earth, to keep out of touch with the low level of this world.

#### FUNCTIONAL RELATEDNESS

We turn now to look at some things of primary account. The things that we have just been considering are perhaps only relatively important; but there are also the greater things, the things of primary account for the full expression of the personality. I am using that word deliberately, for the time being, instead of Christ, because you will get the point better, I think, if I do so. For the full expression of the personality, which is Christ, there must be first of all a body, and a body, as we have read in I Cor. xii, is not so many individual scattered members. The body is not so many disconnected or unconnected members. The Body of Christ is the fellowship of believers, in the Holy Spirit, in a very definite, conscious relatedness, involving an inward registration and recognition that we are related to all the Lord's people, that locality in this matter is not the final criterion, that we are related to the Lord's people everywhere. That is, indeed, most definitely emphasized in the New Testament as an absolute necessity for the full expression of Christ. The full expression of Christ cannot

come through unrelated individual believers. There may be some small, some partial expression of Christ in such, but fulness requires relatedness, and I challenge you on this matter. It is open to proof and it is constantly demonstrated. Your measure of Christ depends upon your relatedness. You will never get beyond a certain small degree of the expression of Christ in isolation, in separation, in independence, in apartness. The increase of your measure of the expression of Christ demands that you are in vital union with other members of His Body. I cannot be too emphatic about that, because I see everywhere the spiritual limitations and even the spiritual ravages resulting from the loss of that great reality. The Body must exist; there must be relatedness. And not just as an abstract thing: it must be real, it must be conscious, it must be deliberate, it must be a part of the very life. We know it—and if we do not know it, Satan knows it—but the Lord knows it.

#### INTERRELATEDNESS

And then there must be interrelatedness. Inter-relatedness is essential to the full expression of this union, this fellowship, this relatedness; there must be a working together, there must be a mutual consideration with a view to helping one another, definitely helping one another. We are members not only of Christ—we have read that twice already—but "severally one of another". That is interrelatedness, and it is the very practical aspect of the Body of Christ that there is mutual support and mutual helpfulness, and that we are really laying ourselves out for the good of other members of the Body of Christ. That is the only way of the fulness of His expression. I said this is subject to test, to proof. You will find that your measure of Christ increases when you go to help another member of Christ; when you consider the need of other members of the Body and do what you can to meet it, Christ is coming out in fuller expression in your own life. If you are wrapped up in yourself, circling around yourself, occupied with yourself, nursing your own grievances and sufferings and trials and difficulties, and so becoming more and more isolated and imprisoned within yourself, your measure of Christ is diminishing all the time. It is that outward movement to His own that means spiritual increase to the one who makes it. It is necessary, it is essential, for the full expression of the personality. The New Testament is largely constructed upon that truth.

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

## INTERDEPENDENCE

And in the next place, interdependence. It is only another phase of the same thing. This brings in a general spirit of meekness. One member cannot say to another, 'I have no need of you'. It is not, perhaps, likely that you would say that in so many words. It may have been said in Corinth. It does seem as though something like that was going on there, and those actual words may have been used by some about others. 'We can do without you!' 'You do not count!' But it is not likely that spiritual people would use those actual phrases. Yet we act them. We behave like that too often. It is one of the lessons that we have got to learn. We really must consider this matter—that somehow or other the members which are least honourable are necessary. Somehow or other, those whom we would discount are necessary. It may be difficult sometimes to see how they are necessary. At any rate, it is to be an attitude. Can the Lord do without that one? Does not all the grace of God in salvation and in glorification come down to that least one? And am I not the least one, after all? Do we feel we are more important than others, and that we therefore merit the grace of God more than some others do? You see, the whole question of meekness arises. Interdependence means that somehow we need one another. That is true, and that is a necessary basis for the full expression of Christ—mutual recognition, mutual honouring; so that we take the attitude, 'Now, this child of God, with all the faults and weaknesses, cannot be despised, cannot be cut off as of no account. Somewhere they fit into the whole in the realm of the Spirit, and the measure of Christ is increased.' In that way we try to make the most of the least. There must be an acceptance of the fact of the Body.

## FUNCTIONAL CONSTITUTION AND APPOINTMENT

Then we must accept, definitely accept, the fact of the constitutional function of each member: that is, that each member, if really a member of Christ—and so possessing the indwelling Holy Spirit,—each member, by the Holy Spirit, is in some way constituted with a function. Now, we must take that to ourselves. You may feel that you have not any place or function; you have always been trying to find out what it is, but you have never discovered it. How many people have come to me and said something like this—'Do you

really believe that I represent some function in the Body of Christ? I wish you would tell me what it is!' I will answer that in another way. I am saying that we must accept the fact as stated in the Word of God, that, if this is not just some picture, some illustration, this figure of the body; if it is a reality, if the body is more than a metaphor, if it is a living reality and the Church is constituted on the very principles of the physical body of a man, as undoubtedly it is, if that is true, then these facts hold good, they are facts and we have got to accept the facts.

Now you can theorize about the functions of your body, if you like, but you will sooner or later have to accept the facts of it: they are *facts*. And so are these things that I am mentioning. We have to accept the fact that as members of Christ, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, we are constituted with a function in the Body of Christ and we have got to function. We have to recognise that we are there to function, not to be parasites or passengers, but to fulfil vital functions in the Body of Christ. If we accept the fact, and adjust ourselves to the fact, the Holy Spirit can do things; but if we become passive, if we sit down and decide that we do not count for anything and therefore what is the good of it—to-day we are eggs, to-morrow we are feather-dusters!—if we adopt that kind of attitude, the Holy Spirit will not do anything. The Holy Spirit says, Now then, on your feet and give Me an opportunity; take a positive attitude toward this reality, this truth, that you are a member of Christ's Body and that He has no paralysed members.

That means, of course, more than the acceptance of the fact of our position in the Body and of our having a function in the Body. It means the acceptance of our *responsibility*, that we regard ourselves as responsible people in the Body of Christ, that we take responsibility for the expression of Christ—not personal importance, assertiveness, self-realisation, but the expression of Christ. I am here as a member of a Body, the function of which is to express the indwelling personality, which is Christ. That is a serious responsibility, a solemn charge and obligation, as well as a privilege. We must take this up. Why am I joined to Christ? Why am I a member of Christ's Body? For such I am if I am in Christ. Why am I in that position? For no other and no lesser purpose than to be the vehicle of the expression of Christ, and if I am not doing that I am contradicting the very meaning of my union with Christ. We have to take responsibility over it. Every day we have to feel



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responsible about this matter of the expression of Christ. Of course, that will come down to many things. We slip up, we make mistakes; we speak a wrong thing, or a right thing in a wrong way; somehow or other we default; and at once we say, 'That is not Christ, I must put that right; that has made a false impression, that has dishonoured my Lord, let me clear that up.' That is taking responsibility. There will be many small things like that—though nothing is truly small in the Body of Christ; and we could speak of many other things.

### UNCONSCIOUS FUNCTIONING A SIGN OF HEALTH

Now in a healthy body all this exists very largely unconsciously. Coming back to what I said, asking, 'What is my function?'—your trouble will be that you will not know. In a healthy body, everything happens without your being conscious of it. You do not mentally reason out, work out and think and decide when you are going to take the next breath. You just do it. You never thought anything about it. That is going on in your body if you are healthy. It is all functioning so largely unconsciously. There is an unconscious sense in our physical system. It registers before we register. When we are pulled up by some symptom, some feeling, we begin to realise that something has gone wrong physically. But the system registered that before we were conscious of it. It is only bringing us to recognise what it has already recognised. That is going on all the time. In a healthy body there is no self-occupation with—'What am I, who am I, where am I, what is my function?' And when the Body of Christ is healthy, there is a spontaneous expression of Christ. It just happens, and it is most healthy when it is like that—indeed it is only healthy when it is like that. When people are self-conscious, when people are letting you know that they are trying to do something for the Lord—there is something wrong there. That is the Body occupied with itself instead of with the Lord. If we are really occupied with the Lord, a very great deal of this self-occupation disappears. Do not worry as to what your function is. You live in union with the Lord and you will function. You may not be able to see what it is that represents your value, but it will be there; you may not be able to see how it is that you are serving the purpose of the Body, but it will be served. Is it not true that we have known those who have felt themselves the poorest, the weakest, the most foolish, and we have found a

fragrance of Christ, a beautiful fragrance of Christ, in that life, and they were all the time so troubled because they did not feel they were any good at all? We have met Christ. It is quite a healthy state to be in—far better than the opposite. There is an unconscious registration going on.

And when there is this unconscious registration, if anything does go wrong, what has been registered in the spirit within begins to make itself felt outwardly, and we become aware of the symptoms. We know there is something wrong. It has come up somewhere from the depths; something is not right. What I am saying is that there is a fact of things before there is an understanding of things. Before there is a mental apprehension, there is a fact, the fact of function before we understand. We said in an earlier chapter in this series that sometimes there can be a true living, beautiful expression of the real meaning of the Body of Christ without any of the teaching or the technique. That does not mean that teaching becomes unnecessary; but the right order is that the thing should be there first, and that you should come to something more by understanding what is there: whereas if you put it the other way and get all the teaching and technique and then try to get reality, it does not work—it is the wrong way round.

### CHRIST'S HEADSHIP

I am going to close with this, the key to all—and there is a great deal more than I have said: you know how much we could say about the Body of Christ and its function, it is just full of wonderful Divine meaning—but the key to all is Christ's Headship expressed in every member, in every part. There is a sense in which our heads, physically, naturally, can be said to be present in every part of a healthy body. You can take the finest point and touch any part of the body, to the farthest extremity—and how do you sense it? you know it in your head, you register it there. In a healthy body, the head, if it is free to function and is really functioning, is in touch with, and as it were represented in, every part. In the same way the Headship of Christ—His absolute Headship, Lordship, sovereignty, call it what you will—being expressed in any and every part of the Body and in every function, is the key to everything.

This means, of course, simply that every one of us, howsoever many we be, must be immediately and utterly under the absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ if the foregoing is to be true. The ex-

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pression of Christ demands the Lordship of Christ. The manifestation of Christ demands that He have His place as Head in every part.

Now do take that as the sum of everything; but do remember, do believe it—for you are going to prove it—you are going out or you are going on, you are going down or you are going up; we are all either going to make spiritual progress or we are going to retrogress. There is no standing still in this. We are on a slippery slope, and the only way is to keep going up or else we shall go down, and it is going to be like that all the way. Have no mistake about it. We are not just going to be stationary. If we do not go on we are going to lose ground. It is a fact which is borne out by the experience of every one of us, that we just *cannot* cease to be positive. It is a most perilous thing to cease to be positive in the Christian life. Lack of

fervency of spirit uncovers us, it takes our defences away, and we shall be steadily undone, steadily disintegrated, steadily made to lose out. This matter of the Body of Christ as a living organism, with relatedness and interrelatedness and interdependence, is no theory or technique. These are vital relationships connected with the increase of spiritual life, the enlargement of the expression of Christ, the justification of our very existence. But they are necessary things. You let your fellowship with the Lord's people suffer and you let your own spiritual life suffer. If you in any way become detached and isolated in spirit, in mind, in action, you cut the very vitals of your own spiritual life. It is like that. This functional union with Christ in His Body is essential. It is essential to Him, for the fulfilment of His purpose. It is essential to us in the fulfilment of our very life as Christians.

T. A-S.

## STANDING WITH THEM

### A WORD TO YOUNG CHRISTIANS

THE story in Acts iii is the first detailed account of the individual experience of one of the many who were added to the Lord after Pentecost. It may well be, then, that the lame man serves as a kind of illustration or example of what the Holy Spirit was doing with men as they found the Saviour. Everything was new for him; he had new life, new joy and new prospects; but an outstanding feature for us to note was his new relatedness. We find that, in being added to the Lord, he was also added to the church. This was no vague or theoretical matter; it meant that for practical purposes he now had to share his life with others.

Chapter ii closes with the statement that the Lord added to the church daily those that were being saved. Chapter iii sets out to show us what it means in a man's life to be saved by the Name of Jesus and then to be added to the church. In one glorious act of redemption, this man was made one with the risen Christ, and also made one with the members of Christ here on the earth. There are two testimonies which express these facts, namely, baptism and the laying-on of hands. They are not mentioned here, for the purpose of this story is not to stress the testimonies, but to set forth clearly the vital facts which they represent. These facts are: first, that a sinner who truly believes on the Name of the Lord Jesus is instantaneously saved; and, second, that by this very experience of salvation he finds himself a living member of the church

which the Holy Spirit brought into being on the day of Pentecost. It is twice recorded of this man's relationship with Peter and John, who were members and representatives of that church, that he was found 'with them'. He was 'with them' because the Lord had added him to the church. What did this adding involve for him?

### WITH THEM IN DEPENDENCE

It meant first that his new life needed association with others for its proper development. "He entered with them into the temple" (iii. 8). He went their way, and he kept close to them; indeed we are told that "he held Peter and John" (iii. 11). He felt that he needed them. The association was spontaneous and self-chosen. It was as though he had an inward sense that now he belonged, not only to Jesus in heaven, but to the family of Jesus here on earth.

He did not leap ahead. The other two were doubtless filled with joy, but we do not read that they leaped as he did, nor even that they quickened their pace. How easy it would have been, then, for the new believer to rush impetuously on, without reference to them! Why wait for them? He had waited outside the temple for forty years; now he was privileged to enter. He had just received such abundant blessings from heaven that he might have been excused if he had hastened on to

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pour out his personal thanks, or even to announce his amazing experience. But instead of pressing on alone, he entered "with them".

He did not turn round and rush away from the temple. He must have longed to go and tell his friends, to hurry home, to shout abroad in the streets what great things God had done for him. Had not Peter himself insisted that he and John were nothing in themselves? Had not they urged him to look away from them to the Saviour Jesus, and to trust in Him? He had the Lord Jesus for himself; he could feel the power of eternal life pulsating through his very limbs: why should he not hurry away to proclaim his new Lord in his own way?

The fact remains that he did neither of these two things. If he leaped forward with joy, he also leaped back again to keep near to the apostles. If he had any impulse to go off in another direction, it was checked and overcome by a stronger sense that he ought to keep close to them. They did not tell him to do this. They did not charge him to maintain any association with them, nor did they invite him to become a member of their company. It seems that his behaviour was governed by an inward urge, rather than by any human instructions. The Holy Spirit had come to him, adding him to the Lord's family. Deeper, then, than any mere sense of gratitude, or any desire to observe rules or to choose friends, he held Peter and John because the new life within him insisted that he must keep close contact with the others who had the same life. They did not hold him. There was nothing official in the relationship. He held them, for interdependence is a law of eternal life.

His spirit of dependence was a perfectly healthy one. It did not mean that the apostles had to carry him. Alas, that in so many cases nowadays, the spiritually lame man has to be carried by the church. This would have meant that the man had merely changed his bearers, as though instead of being carried to the Temple gate by his neighbours, he was now lifted up and borne into the Temple by Christian friends. The church was not brought into being to take responsibility for cripples and to carry them along. Its ministry is to make men stand on their own feet in the Lord. The believer must learn to walk in the strength of Christ, to prove the Lord for himself: not expect others to govern or guide his life for him. We must beware of erroneous ideas concerning fellowship. The life which we share together is an inward energy and not an external prop. The man did not even hold the apostles in order to steady himself. We might

have thought that perhaps, after all his years of inactivity, his ankles would need gradual development, and his balance only slowly become possible. To keep this matter clear, the Spirit has seen fit to record that he was not only walking but leaping. He did not need support. There is no convalescence in spiritual healing. Either you are on natural ground, in all your weakness, or else you are on the ground of Christ, which means fulness of living power. No; he held them because he wanted to, because he felt that he belonged to them, and because he did not confuse individual experience of Christ with individualistic disregard for His members.

He was a humble man. He realised, and oh, how rightly, that he had everything to learn. Peter could not teach him; nor could John. Only the Holy Spirit could do that. But the Spirit does His instructing, developing, correcting and adjusting work by means of other members of Christ. The apostles themselves were learning. We are all learning. It is in our life together as a family that many valuable and important lessons are learnt. Instinctively the new convert realised that his life had entered upon an entirely new phase, and that henceforth it was intimately bound up with that of his new friends. He knew, instinctively, that his real world, his true realm, now lay *there*. It was a right instinct: the instinct of the new life in the Spirit. The church is essential as a place for practical instruction in the life in the Spirit. This, then, is our first point, namely, that the function of corporate life is to provide spiritual safeguard and instruction for the individual believer.

#### WITH THEM IN TESTIMONY

The united testimony was conclusive. "And seeing the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it" (Acts iv. 14). The Spirit has baptized believers into one body for the purposes of testimony, to keep Christ in view. In the council chamber at Jerusalem there was surely a fulfilment of the Lord's promise. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. xviii. 20). We have so often limited this affirmation to prayer gatherings or other meetings. This need not be so. The meaning is that wherever a few believers are in vital touch with the Lord and in true unity together, Christ is there made known in power. The three proved this as they stood together, surrounded by bitter enemies, and gave a mighty registration of the testimony of Jesus. The church has been



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brought into being for this very thing, that through her the vital impact of Christ may be made known, in a way that could never be possible through isolated individual Christians.

There were three parts to this testimony. Peter was the spokesman, and certainly the Holy Spirit witnessed to Christ through his words. John, though seemingly silent, gave strength and confirmation to Peter's words, and was, perhaps, upholding him in prayer. The third function was that of the healed man, who provided the living evidence, right up-to-date, of the reality of the risen Christ. He is left nameless, to represent that element of the church's testimony which does not appear in public ministry, and attains no special prominence, but has a vital rôle to fulfil. Without him the testimony would have lacked a very important element. But the truth is that it was no one man, but the three together, who gave the mighty testimony to Christ. In this threefold witness we are presented with the second great function of the church—to keep Christ in view.

Although this man's contribution was so essential, the greater part of the message was concerned not with him, but with his Lord. It is always the Spirit's concern to focus everything on Christ. The puzzled rulers could find some vague explanation of Peter and John. "They took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus" (iv. 13). There was some supernatural power and presence about them, some real spiritual impact, but it could be partly explained away by the fact that they had spent years under the personal instruction and influence of Jesus. The lame man had not. When they "took knowledge of him", all they could find was that "it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple" (iii. 10). Yet the same indefinable something, the disquieting challenge, the vital transformation, was seen in him as in the other two.

This explains a practical aspect of corporate testimony. If Peter seems wonderful, then it may be put down to the special character of the man—though Peter was the first to deny this (iii. 12). If Peter and John seem to have some special power, then it may be explained away by their associations and training. But the unanswerable argument was that this nameless witness had the same power: he stood "with them". The only explanation was that each was indwelt by the same wonderful life, and that the virtue was not with the men concerned but with the risen Christ. The more that is multiplied, the more who stand "with them" in vital testimony, the more overwhelming is the evi-

dence that this same life, common to them all, must be the one life of the crucified and risen Saviour. If you are an isolated witness, people may think that in yourself you are a wonderful man. If you are part of a common testimony, the verdict must be that the matter is not personal at all. It is not due to the natural qualities of the different men, but to the spiritual presence of the Lord in them all. As the three stood together, they gave a convincing proof that Jesus is alive and that He is on the throne. This testimony is the church's duty and privilege.

## WITH THEM IN THE CONFLICT

When the Lord Jesus spoke of His church as the "two or three gathered together" in His name, He gave rather more than a hint that all Hell would make a savage onslaught on such a vital association. The two apostles and the healed cripple soon found how true this was. Any one of the three might perhaps have gone into the Temple, offered his praises or given his own personal testimony, without any special opposition. But as soon as there is some corporate expression of the church, however small and however simple, there seems to be a furious uprising of evil forces. The lame man was now to find how much is involved by his standing "with them".

It seems clear that he must have spent the night in prison with Peter and John. This is nowhere stated, but it is made very evident that when they were brought out before the council, he was still with them. Now this was no public meeting, into which any might intrude uninvited. Though held in the Temple precincts, it was quite clearly private, for when the council wished to confer, they had the prisoners taken outside. And yet the new convert was there, and actually standing alongside the accused. It seems certain, then, that he was with them in the council chamber because he had been kept with them all night in prison. So this was his first night as a saved and liberated man! A strange beginning! The battle had begun to rage.

But he was still "with them". Many of us would give a good deal to have spent a whole night with the two leading apostles, even if it was a night in prison. Was it there, we may wonder, that they received light as to the true nature of of this sudden, savage attack upon them? When, on the next day, they met with the rest of the Jerusalem church, they had the answer. They knew that Psalm ii was the explanation of the hellish

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haired against the church. It may well have been that they reached this conclusion as they waited before the Lord in that darkened cell. And if so, this simple believer came very quickly to understand one of the greatest of spiritual secrets, namely, the part that the church has been called upon to play in the great spiritual conflict of the ages.

The world-rulers—seen and unseen—are concentrating all their fury upon the King of God's choice, the Anointed Son. At Calvary they attacked Him personally, and were defeated. From Pentecost onwards, they continue the attack upon Him as He is represented here on the earth by His members. This is one of the meanings of being "added to the church": it involves taking a vital part in a cruel spiritual battle for world dominion. The issue of the psalm is world-dominion for the Son. The early church came at this very moment to realise that they had been precipitated into the storm-centre of that conflict.

And the church was not on the defensive. The first phase of the battle ended with their being threatened in the council-chamber. The second phase began when the church in prayer made their counter-attack, took the offensive, and pressed the issue through to victory. The new convert soon discovered that his real usefulness consisted not only in leaping and praising God, not only in telling men of the only Name in which they could be saved, but also in standing "with them" in prayer-conflict.

The prayer which followed their citation of the psalm is most illuminating. They did not ask for peace. They did not pray for a spiritual armistice. They pressed home the battle by asking for new boldness to maintain their testimony, and for heaven's confirmation of it. And the immediate and mighty answer proved that this is the true spirit of the militant church, for the place was shaken, and they were all filled anew with the Holy Spirit.

It may be objected that the healed man is nowhere stated to have been present at this meeting. What, then, shall we imagine? That having stood so long with the apostles, he should now bid them farewell, and go his own private way? Well, if he did, he missed the greatest blessing that ever a man could have. Or shall we suggest that Peter and John told the man who had stood so long with them, that now he could not follow them to the prayer meeting, because he was not yet qualified to take part in their church life? The very mention of this possibility reveals its absurdity. No, "they

came to their own company", and he had now discovered that their company was his company, just as their Lord was his Lord.

Having said all this, let us reconsider the implications of "standing with them". It meant for him, hatred, persecution and spiritual conflict: it meant the prison cell, the official threatening and the entering into the prayer warfare. This was no private matter. It was not the automatic effect of his being saved. He could have gone quietly home, enjoying privately the new blessings which the name of Jesus had brought him. The real troubles seem to have resulted from united life and united testimony. All of which serves to emphasize yet another feature of corporate life: namely, that the church is the Divine instrument for facing and defeating the hosts of spiritual wickedness. Far more depends on our united life than we can imagine: through it the Lord plans to destroy the spiritual rule of evil.

#### WITH THEM IN THE FULNESS

The last point for us to notice is that the church is the realm of fulness. It is a mystery that the fulness of Christ is only experienced in corporate life together, but it is an undoubted reality. Consider the case of this man. He was a new convert and an ignorant man, yet in a remarkable way he shared a mighty experience of the Spirit's fulness. He had scarcely had time to hear about Pentecost, yet he was brought right into its full meaning. "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost" (iv. 31).

Many of them had already known the great outpouring on the day of Pentecost. They were to learn that there are ever new experiences of the fulness to be entered into. Christ is not exhausted when He pours forth of His fulness. We are not to imagine that because He has filled us once, we have nothing more to receive or experience. The great significance of the exaltation of the Lord is that now He is able to give forth His living energy into the redeemed, to make them a people who live in the good of heavenly life, heavenly purity and heavenly power. And we are told that it is "the church which is His body" which is "the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. i. 23). What it amounts to is this. Had the lame man gone his own way, separating himself from the apostles, he might never have tasted this blessed experience of the fulness. Happily he realised that his life must be related to and associated with the others: he held fast to them, and in doing so

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fulfilled a deep and vital spiritual principle, which brought him straightway into the practical meaning of being "in one Spirit . . . baptized into one body" (I Cor. xii. 13).

His conversion had not only, nor even primarily, given him a private and particular anointing. What it had done was to bring him into the life-sphere of "The Christ", that blessed unity of Head and members, whose life-stream is the Holy Spirit. In company with the rest he tasted of the fulness. And, strange though it may seem, he had his own contribution to give to the rest. We are not told what his particular gift or function was, but we may be sure that he had one. We do know that this whole occasion was brought about by the events which were directly associated with his salvation. God made him a blessing to them all.

The great law of healthy life in the body of Christ is the law of love—not sentimental love from a distance, but practical love in actual life together. In those early days the abundance of life was very manifest, because one of the chief features was the loyal and unselfish unitedness of all the members. And so "they were *all* filled with the Holy Ghost". This, then, is a further explanation of the meaning of the church. It is that life-

sphere of spiritual fulness in which each individual member may find his own personal sufficiency and ministry. He receives of the fulness, and at the same time he contributes to it; all in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Is this visionary? Has it a practical outworking? Think of the three men who met at the Beautiful Gate of the temple. The lame man was destitute; he begged for even a small gift to provide for his great poverty. Peter and John were almost as poor: they had to confess that they had neither silver nor gold. Yet as the church began to function in all its simplicity, their every need was met. "Neither was there among them any that lacked . . . distribution was made unto each, according as any one had need" (Acts iv. 34, 35). Their personal destitution was swallowed up in the corporate wealth of love. It may be difficult to see how in these days we can best express that happy time when "they had all things common" (ii. 44). It is impossible, and undesirable, to try to imitate what they did. But the principle remains, that when the church is living in the power of the risen Christ, it becomes the sphere in which the individual member may enter into his share of the fulness.

H. F.

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRIST

## II. IN RELATION TO THE RACE AS GOD INTENDS IT TO BE

*"And the Lord spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord. And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David: Is it a small thing for you to weary men, that ye will weary my God also? Therefore THE LORD HIMSELF SHALL GIVE YOU A SIGN: behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah vii. 10-14).*

IN our previous meditation upon the significance of Christ, we were gathered around the Cross and heard the bitter, anguished cry wrung from the breaking heart of our Lord Jesus—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—and we sought to understand that in that deepest moment of all the ages the Son of Man was dealing with the deepest cry of the human heart, the cry for fellowship with God, the cry for the face of God. All through the ages that has been the one concern

of man: to know that the face of God is toward him. With the garden and what transpired there, followed by man's expulsion, the face of God was lost to the race, and so for ever man has been, as it were, in a wilderness, having lost the face of God. The Lord Jesus took up that state of the withdrawn face of God on behalf of the whole race and bore the sin which brought it about, and recovered the face of God for all men who will believe. The face of God toward man is only another way of saying that heaven is opened again, having been closed fast by God Himself.

Now we are going to consider the man of the open heaven. There is a man, we have seen, a man corporately, racially, a humanity of the first Adam who cannot have the face of God, cannot know the open heaven. There is the Man who can, and who has, and we are going to look at these men—the man of the closed heaven and the Man of the opened heaven: the man without the face of God and the Man with the face of God.



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## NATURAL MAN'S QUEST FOR POWER

We have to ask at the outset—from what was the face of God turned away and why? What was it that lay behind and led to Adam's loss of the light of God's countenance and resulted in the desolation of his soul as of a wilderness? The Bible, of course, is full of the answer. There are various ways in which that question can be answered. Doctrinally, we should use certain words. We should say it was because of sin or unrighteousness, but then we are committed to explain what we mean by sin and unrighteousness. I think the answer nearest to the heart of the whole matter is given more fully when we say that the reason for that lost face, that closed heaven, was and is a nature which is opposed to God, a nature which is sinful and unrighteous, a nature whose sinfulness and unrighteousness is found in its desire to usurp the place of God. That is the heart of it—a nature disposed to usurp the place of God, and when you try to gather that up and express it in a word, it amounts to this—the quest for power.

It is to that that you trace everything in the fall, in what took place in the garden in Adam's case, and we are informed by the Scriptures that that quest for power, that unholy quest for power which is unrighteousness, which is contrary to what is right, had an earlier history in another realm. We are informed of the one who came to Adam having formerly made such a bid for power to usurp the place of God, and that was the essence of the temptation in the garden. Of course it was not explained to be so. Deception wrapped it around. Adam would probably have fled from that temptation had he seen its nature, perceived its essence. Anyone who does not implicitly obey the word of God because it is the word of God, without any explanation of why He has given it, will be deceived, and, being deceived, will be caught in the deepest trap of evil, of unrighteousness.

The essence of the temptation was to make a bid for power, which would put man in an advantageous position over God, make God unnecessary, put God out of His supreme and exclusive place, and bring man in as equal with God, at least. That is it. It was that that lost the open heaven, the face of God. And we find that that is the very heart, the very root, of the human nature which has sprung from that first Adam. That is the battleground. You might not, indeed, admit, when it is put so glaringly and nakedly and luridly, that that represents yourself. How little we know ourselves, and how little we make our deductions or draw our

conclusions from all the things that are happening in human life! Why, this is the very stuff of 'psychology'—of what is happening to-day in the whole nervous system of the race: it is the reason why people are queuing up to see the nerve specialists—I will not use their technical names—people who can tell them what is the matter with them—because this and that and the other symptom brings such a lot of distress into their lives.

A whole list of new terms has been produced in recent years in that particular realm. 'Frustration'—what a word that is! 'Inferiority complex.' You are beginning to recognise the list. Behind many—not all, but many—of the nervous breakdowns, when the matter is looked into and explored, there is all the time something to do with the selfhood: the selfhood cannot have what it wants, do what it wants, be what it wants, get where it wants. In these various and numerous ways it suffers nervous reaction. The word 'frustration' is a very good one. People are bothered and troubled about themselves, and the matter resolves itself into a clash with the power to do and to be—the defeat of the *soul*. How deeply related to the soul, that is, to the self-conscious life of man, is this question of power—power to be, power to do; power to find one's satisfaction and contentment in being something and doing something, and not being a nobody without significance—the whole soul revolts against that. It is a question of power. As I have said, frustration and the inferiority complex are the very stuff of psychology.

You see, this soul of ours must in some way or other be on top. In order to be on top, it must subject everything and everybody to itself. It must go one better and be one better than the others, and there rise all the jealousies, the rivalries, the competitiveness, the possessiveness, the impatience—to be on top, not to be underneath.

## PRIDE LINKED WITH THE LUST FOR POWER

The lust for power and pride are inseparable. You know why pride is an abomination to God, why God 'beholdeth the proud afar off' (Psalm cxxxviii, 6). It is because behind the pride is this selfhood which took its rise from the spring of Satan in the human race: the desire to have power. We can see quite clearly how true that is in human life individually. It lies behind the whole world to-day—power and pride working together to have domination, everyone going one better than the other. You have only got to suggest that some

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nation or people have made a certain discovery, or produced some invention and it will not be long before some other people or nation will say they have gone one better, and so it goes on. That is the thing that constitutes the root and basic sin of this universe—the quest for power. It is the commencement and the consummation of Antichrist.

This is the human nature of the first Adam, and as with its originator, Satan, so it is always insinuating itself into the things of God and invading His very presence. The whole painful story of the Church's disruption, dissension and failure is the story of this selfhood coming into the realm of the things of God—self-assertion, possessiveness, domination, place in the Church, place in the work of God. What a story is bound up with this inherent lust for power, which, if it does not show itself in the more positive forms of self-assertion, will express itself in a feigned meekness, and is manifest in this inferiority complex. You do not know anything about such a thing as an inferiority complex if you do not suffer: and what is it that you are suffering? You are suffering the mortification of being less than you think you ought to be—and that is simply an expression of the lust for power. I am not going to dwell upon the miserable picture. I am only seeking to come to the main point.

God is not going on with that. He decided right back at the beginning, in the garden, that He was not going any further with that, His face was not toward that, it was turned away; never would that kind of humanity or human nature find His face. No, God will not go on with that kind of humanity.

### CHRIST'S UNDERCUTTING OF THE NATURAL MAN

There is another kind, another type, with whom God will go on; but this former has got to be completely undercut; and herein is the significance of Christ, where we reach the more helpful phase of this contemplation. Everything about the Lord Jesus relates to this very thing—on the one hand, the undercutting of a human nature, a human order and kind that can never know the face of God, and, on the other side, the bringing in of a humanity that can have that face, that countenance and that open heaven. I repeat—everything about Christ relates to that issue.

### THE SIGN OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH

Now I go back to that passage in Isaiah vii. 14—*"The Lord himself shall give you a sign: behold,*

*a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel"*: the sign of the incarnation; and there are several things about that—connected with the incarnation of the Son of God—which simply, beautifully and clearly bear out the issue we are considering.

Firstly, the sign of the virgin birth—"Behold, a virgin shall conceive". Man is ruled out. What is said about those who through faith have the right to become children of God?—"who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John i. 13). 'Not of the will of a man', it is literally: man in his strength, and his initiative, has no place in this new kind of humanity that knows the face of God. It is man on his weak side. You remember in the beginning He called them—man and woman together—He called them both "Man" (Gen. v. 2), meaning that the race had two sides, a strong and a weak. That woman is the weaker vessel is, of course, not universally acknowledged in these days! But therein lies a reversal of all the glorious Divine thought. Only on his weak side has man a place in this; shall we say, only in his weakness and not in his strength, not in his initiative by deciding: "not . . . of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man". "A virgin shall conceive." That represents weakness, the weak side of the race, humanity on its weak side.

You will not misunderstand my usage of that word 'weak'. It is a glorious word when rightly related. Do not misinterpret, you sisters who read this, and say you have to be weak in the wrong sense. You have got to be strong in weakness as you have to be weak in strength. When the angel appeared to the virgin and announced what was going to happen, and she got through her perplexity and the battle which would very naturally arise in her, and surmounted the natural human factors, her response was, "*Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word*" (Luke i. 38). A virgin, a handmaid—weakness, humility and subjection. It was along that pathway that the new Heavenly Man came and recovered the face of God for man. That is the very beginning of this humanity, the kind of person who will have the face of God, who will inherit the open heaven: weak, humble, not assertive.

You see, right back even before His birth. His very door into this world was the door which undercuts the whole Adam race, in that nature of unrighteousness which, in its own strength, or in having strength in itself, would usurp the place of God. For "*Be it unto me according to thy word*" speaks

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of a disposition that is far removed from usurping the place of God. It was the sign of the virgin, that had been promised: "the Lord himself shall give you a sign". What is the significance of Christ? Here is the answer. Right there, before He is born into this world. He has undercut the human strength of the race, man's will, the strength of the flesh—nay, more than that, has undercut the very work of the devil in the race. He was manifested "that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John iii. 8). While it was by His Cross that He did that, the basis of it was the incorruptible life in Him. The Virgin Birth is a deep thing of God in the undercutting of a fallen nature, the work of the devil.

#### THE SIGN OF THE UNIMPORTANT TOWN

"But thou, Beth-lehem Ephrathah, which art little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall one come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel" (Micah v. 2). Little among the thousands of Judah—the thousands of families, that is, of Judah. The sign of that unimportant town. The Lord is sovereignly keeping to principle. Everything connected with the very birth, incarnation, of the Lord Jesus contains the principle. To be ruler He ought to have been born surely in Jerusalem or some important place, but no. By that time Bethlehem Ephrathah had lost its place of importance. Its importance was spiritual, not natural. It was just there that Rachel died when Benjamin, 'the son of Jacob's right hand' was born (Gen. xxxv. 18, 19), and it was said that in him Israel was to find its realisation. It was spiritual significance. All natural significance has gone now, and there, where there was no significance, the most significant thing happened and the most significant Person was born. It is very simple. It is not making something of nothing. It is following the working out of a principle.

#### THE SIGN OF THE MANGER

Listen again to this sign in Luke: "And this is the sign unto you: Ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger". "This is the sign unto you." What does it signify? What is the significance of the lowly manger? Well, it is obvious, it is plain. Surely such a One as He ought to have had a more imposing, impressive place for birth, for entering the world? But no: He is undercutting all the importance of this world, all the glory of the flesh, of the old race. He

is just undercutting it with every step. Many, many have been the homilies and helpful addresses upon Bethlehem's manger, the place of His birth; but oh, let us see right back behind that manger, behind that humble cattle-trough, right back into hell, right back through the whole depth of a fallen and God-abandoned humanity. That is what it touches. It is related to that.

#### "A SIGN . . . SPOKEN AGAINST"

And then in that very same chapter—Luke ii. verse 34—we have this: "And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the falling and rising up of many in Israel; and for a sign which is spoken against". "This child is set . . . for a sign which is spoken against." As you know, the reproach which was laid upon Him by His nation was that He was not important enough. He disappointed all their expectations and hopes as to what their Messiah would be. Oh, what a crashing of their castles in the air was the actual fulfilment of the prophecy—"Behold, thy king cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass" (Zech. ix. 9). A sign spoken against. If only He had been somebody of greater importance, a personality with power in the temporal realm, they would not have spoken against Him as they did. It was all the time—"Is not this the carpenter?" (Mark vi. 3). 'Who is this fellow making Himself out to be? He is a nobody! He is taking far too much on Himself. He really cannot rightly lay claim to all this. Look at Him!' A sign spoken against. What was it for? It was to undercut all that the world looks for and must have in its great ones—strength of their own kind, power of their own. "A sign which is spoken against."

#### THE SIGN OF NAZARETH

And so we can glance through His life and see the same principle always obtaining. His home was in despised Nazareth. "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John i. 46). 'Give a dog a bad name, and hang him!' Nazareth had a bad name, and He lived there. Not much of a prospect, coming from Nazareth. His work?—a carpenter of Nazareth! "Is not this the carpenter's son?" (Matthew xiii. 55).

#### THE SIGN OF TWO TURTLE-DOVES

Then consider His poverty. In that chapter, Luke ii. we find that they brought Him to the



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temple, to offer the offering commanded by Moses, and what was it?—the offering of the poorest people in the land. Some could bring a bullock, some could bring a ram, but the poorest, who could not afford anything like that, could bring two turtle doves: and His parents offered two turtle doves. How poor they were! His life throughout was like that.

## THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF CHRIST'S WORK OF UNDERCUTTING

And then His death. Oh, the depth of shame, of *shame*, of ignominy, of disgrace! Oh, the stripping of every vestige of human pride when He became "obedient unto death, yea, the death of the Cross". The death of the Cross! Not being compelled to it, but being obedient to it: not having by outward compulsion to yield, but Himself accepting it. Does it need that we should say more? Has He not undercut the old Adam in all his pride, in all his self-importance, in all his quest for power? Yes: He did it when He was "crucified through weakness" (II Cor. xiii. 4). This is the Man who has opened heaven: this is the Man to whom heaven is opened and heaven's attestation is given, who lives in the light of God's countenance; and this is the Man who, because of what He was and is, has secured that open heaven, that countenance *for us*.

## CHRIST FOR US

The first principle of our Christian life, the very foundation of our Christian life, is not that we are like Him, or that there is anything about us like that. The beginning of the Christian life is not that you have in some way to forsake your pride and be like Jesus. The *beginning* of the Christian life is that what He was and is is given to us by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ. It is put to our account. Yes, I know—you and I are still proud, we still suffer from this horrible thing, it is in our nature. We still resent and resist being made nothing of, being left out of account, being despised and rejected. There is still that in us which does not like it, to say the least. We like to be acknowledged, to be recognised, to have some kind of title amongst men, if we can. It is still there. But, blessed be God, the whole meaning of grace, the grace of God, is that what Jesus Christ

is—not what we are, but *what He is*—is put right to the account of every one who will accept Him. We speak about accepting Jesus Christ as Saviour, accepting Him as Lord; but what does that mean? It means accepting Him as the One that we are not, but that God requires; as the One who makes good all that God demands and we can never supply. That is accepting Christ. Never depart from that. However much you may become concerned and occupied with conformity to His image, that is a later consideration. However much you may be occupied with being made like Christ, never, never at any time allow the matter of the process to get into the place of what He is for you *all the time*. He *is* that Other whom God favours, and we have been made accepted in the Beloved One.

I am going to stop there for the present, in our consideration of the significance of Christ, of the many-sided sign of the Son of Man. Every thing about Christ sets forth some aspect of the undercutting of one kind of humanity or mankind—of one kind of man who has come into this universe and has no longer any place or standing with God. That kind was put away by His great substitutionary and representative act, when He accepted the full, final and consummate result of it in the moment of His cry—"Thou hast forsaken Me". It was all swallowed up in the bitterness, the unspeakable bitterness, of His soul's desolation, and having been swallowed up, there is no longer any place for it: and inasmuch as He Himself in His own nature was not that, He could be raised again—what wonderful words!—"by the glory of the Father" (Rom. vi. 4). It is shame that has gone in the Cross: it is glory that springs out of it, the glory of the Father. And, being raised, He is the "firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. viii. 29). He is the first of this new and different race, the race of those who are begotten, "not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God", and have the right to be called children of God, a new race in Christ. Because of what He is, being put to our desolate and hopeless account by the unspeakable grace of God, we ought to sing, with the deepest, the most profound gratitude and wonder—

'Not what I am, O Lord, but what Thou art:  
That, that alone, can be my soul's true rest.'

T. A-S.

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## THE LIMITATIONS OF GOD

(A Précis)

Reading: *II Chron. xvi. 9; II Kings xiii. 18, 19; Matt. xiii. 22; xxiii. 37, 38; Mark i. 45; vi. 5; ix. 22, 23; John v. 19, 30; Luke xii. 49, 50; John xii. 24-26; Numbers xiv. 22-24; Isa. lix. 1, 2; Mal. iii. 10-12; Ephesians i. 23.*

**WE** think a great deal about the power, the omnipotence, of God, but we seldom think about the limitations of God. There are many things which the Lord cannot do to-day. Although He is omnipotent, He has limitations, and those limitations are clearly taught in the Word. We will look at some examples.

Matt. xiii. 22. We know the Word of God is a mighty thing. It is God's declared will that it shall not return unto Him void; but we read that the Word can be choked, it can be limited.

Matthew xxiii. 37, 38. The Lord Jesus said, "I would . . . and ye would not". There was nothing wrong with the Lord Himself, nor with His will, nor with His power to accomplish that will, but there was something on the side of man which had the power to limit the Lord Himself.

Numbers xiv. 22-24. Jehovah Himself declared time after time that the land was going to be given to His people, and He had the power to bring them in. But we see in this passage that the people had the power to defeat the purpose of God, to limit Him, so that He could not do what He had sworn to do.

Isaiah lix. 1, 2. The hand of the Lord is not shortened, and the ear of the Lord is not deaf. Then why did He not save, why did He not hear? It was because of the sins and the iniquities of His people, which limited Him.

Malachi iii. 10. God wanted to bless the land of Israel with so much blessing that there would not be room to receive it, but He could not do it because the tithe had not been brought into His house.

Mark i. 45. The Lord told this man, whom He had healed, not to say a word about it, but he began to blaze the matter abroad, with the result that the Lord could not enter into the city, but had to shut Himself away in desert places. Natural zeal limits the Lord.

Mark vi. 5. In this case the Lord could do no mighty works, because of unbelief.

II Chron. xvi. 9. Here we see that the Lord is looking for a man whose heart is perfect to-

ward Him, to show Himself strong on his behalf: so that we see that God is limited by an imperfect heart.

If you go through the Word of God, you will find these facts established. God is omnipotent, but His omnipotence is subject to limitations. He must have conditions which are suitable to His working. The question is whether God is going to be limited, or is going to be unlimited. We have to learn through bitter experience that we cannot *help* God, but we have the full power to *hinder* Him. The Creator of heaven and earth can be bound by us, just flesh and blood! It is very serious. I trust the Lord will search our hearts and deal with us in a drastic way, so that we can see clearly if there is anything in us which is hindering and limiting His power. Are we willing to let go anything that may be a hindrance? Are we relying on sight and feeling, or are we living by faith in the living God? Are we trusting God—on the one hand to bring something out of nothing, and on the other hand to bring the dead back to life? Do we believe it, or does our lack of faith hinder Him from showing His power?

There are many things which may hinder, but it would not be profitable for us to attempt to deal with them here—we should get nowhere. The Lord must give us light, and light is certain if we abide in Him. It is not by self-examination—it is by coming to God alone; and the difference between the two is the difference between heaven and earth. We will leave that just for now, and go on to something which is important.

Luke xii. 49, 50 is a passage speaking of the limitations of the Son of God while in the flesh on earth. The word "straitened" can be translated 'crowded', 'cramped', 'not having a free way'. The life, the power, of the Son of God was cramped in His body; He was limited by the condition of being in the body. For instance, He could not be at Jerusalem and Galilee at the same time. He was looking for the day when there would be a "baptism"—that is to say, His death on the Cross—and when that came He would be released from the body of the flesh, and in resurrection would have a spiritual body that would not cramp Him, and His life could be imparted to His people.

That passage is exactly parallel to John xii. 24-26, the grain of wheat falling into the ground and

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dying and bringing forth much fruit. There is life, there is power to reproduce, encaged in that grain—something which has been straitened, cramped, crowded; but when the grain dies, there is a great release, no more limitation. It will come up in much fruit.

The question of "the church, which is his body", comes in here. The body is for the full expression of the personality of the person. The Lord Jesus shows Himself through each member of the Body, and He shows the whole of Himself through the Church. When the Lord was in the flesh, He was moving in a fleshly body. To-day He still manifests Himself in a body, but now it is a spiritual Body, and we are the members, and, as members of His Body, either we may be used to express Him, or we may limit Him. The Body is the way in which He expresses Himself: He has no other way. This is a great responsibility. We are the only means of expression that He has. That is why the utter Lordship of Christ is so very important. We have to come to the place where we are not in any way limiting Him: so that, through His Body, He may bring Himself to bear on the world and on the spirit-world of evil powers. That is what the Lord is seeking in these days.

How does it come about that the omnipotence of God becomes limited by man? and will this limitation be continued for eternity? We find in the Word of God that, in eternity past and eternity to come, God is omnipotent and not subject to limitation. But, in the eternal purpose of God, He wanted a people to share the life of His own Son, and to manifest His Son. In order to bring this about, He created man, a free-willed being; and then the limitation of God began. There are now three wills at work, the Divine, the Satanic, and the human. God will not destroy the human will. He wants the will of the creature to be put on His side instead of on the side of Satan, and so He has ac-

cepted a position of limitation. If man is not on the side of God, God cannot do anything with him. God will not compel him to do anything.

But God is working toward a goal. There is One whose will is absolutely identified with the Father's. There is One who will not limit God; and, by His death and resurrection, His life is imparted to us. A Body is being formed by the power of the Spirit, and God is looking to the members of the Body to function in such a way that they will not limit Him—they will be responsive to Him; and in this new creation, identified with His will, His limitations will be for ever put out of the way. God will be able to come back to His omnipotence without any hindrance. So we are entrusted with the great mission of restoring His omnipotence without limitation. We must first come to the place where God has a free way in us, before He can bring the whole creation back to that. The Church is a firstfruit of God's creation, so what is going to be true universally in the Kingdom-age should be true at least of the overcoming company of the people of God to-day.

What is the Kingdom? "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." That means that there will be no human will coming out to limit Him. When the question of the will is settled, then the question of power is also settled. What is the secret of really serving the Lord? It is not doing a hundred and one things for the Lord. Service is really submission to the Lord—knowing the true meaning of that word, "to obey is better than sacrifice". Abraham was one who obeyed God's voice, and the Lord is after utter responsiveness to Himself, so that He can have a free way, unhindered.

May the Lord speak to our hearts and show us whether there is anything there which will undermine the sovereignty, the lordship, and the headship of Jesus. Once more let us say, Jesus is Lord!

W. N.

## THE FOOD QUESTION

**I**N times of national emergency one of the most vital considerations, and one that very largely governs the issue, is that of the food supply. To conserve it is a primary feature of both defence and aggression. To keep it from falling into the enemy's hands is a tactic of victory. If this is true in the natural and earthly realm, it certainly is true in the spiritual and heavenly. It is not always realised by Christians that they are born (at new birth) into conditions which are such as mark an

emergency. That is to say, a state of war has existed from the day that Adam sinned, and that warfare is becoming more intense as the end of the dispensation approaches. A feature of this warfare is the food question, and the final issue in the case of each believer depends to a very serious degree upon spiritual food. As in the time of Gideon, so now, The Midianites then sought to spoil and steal all the crops. Gideon was marked by God as one to be taken up and used as a de-



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liverer because secretly he gave himself up to conserve food for his brethren, and so defeat the enemy.

But to consider the matter of food generally; there are some quite simple analogies between the natural and the spiritual.

Firstly, then, is the matter of

### APPETITE

A first question asked of a patient by a doctor is, 'How is your appetite?' showing that this is closely related to sickness or health, and may be a symptom. Now a fact to be recognised is that in the Christian there is an "inner man", which is altogether other and distinct from the outer man, and has a whole set of definite faculties and functions. This inner man is capable of growth; of being in sickness or in health; of being weak or strong; of being able to do spiritual exploits, or being impotent in the fight. No matter how full of natural vim and energy a Christian may be, he cannot by any natural strength effect even one iota of spiritual value. There will, sooner or later, be a terrible breakdown both in the worker and the work, and any emergency will quickly precipitate this, if there is no real spiritual constitution. This depends upon spiritual food. But inasmuch as it is so easy to go on in natural energy and activity and fail to realise that it is not really spiritual power, we should apply the test of spiritual life and health. How is your appetite? What kind of an appetite have you for spiritual food? Is it poor? Is it easily satisfied? Is it faddy or fussy? Do you have to have your spiritual food prepared and served up in such a pleasant and tasty way as to make you feel that you are eating and yet not eating? What can you eat? is a question for the delicate and invalid.

For the truly healthy and sound, the demand is for 'something that you can put your teeth into'; 'something solid'; 'something to live and work on'! This is a fairly sound test of our spiritual life, and Paul, the Apostle, has left us in no doubt about it. "I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but . . . as unto babes, I fed you with milk, not with meat; for . . . ye were not able to bear it" (I Cor. iii. 1, 2).

### A SELF-DECEIVING PRACTICE

One of the most treacherous and disastrous features of the feeding side of life in recent years is the confectionery side. Pleasant to the taste,

nullifying the sense of hunger *for the moment*, anything more substantial is destroyed. But it is quick to be taken, the sense of need or desire for a false world, treacherous in that it fails to make for constitution, and when the rigid test comes; when epidemics are rife, and germs are abroad; when for any reason endurance is called for or a crisis has to be passed, then the fatal lack of constitution is revealed.

This all has a tragic counterpart or parallel in the spiritual life. There is a distressing tendency to serve up spiritual things in the way that will make the least demand. Attractiveness is a primary consideration. The solid classics of a generation or two ago have been supplanted by that which can be read in a few minutes, and then is done with. It is said that this is what is demanded, and there is little demand for anything more substantial. Is this a symptom of the spiritual state of the majority of Christians to-day? We cannot but foresee a terrible 'fainting in the day of adversity'.

The perils of this condition are many and great. One of them is a predisposition to error. Errors usually gain their advantage by presenting something which offers the line of least resistance. That is to say, they seem easily to solve some difficult problem, or offer a quick way to a desired end. There is something pleasant and fascinating about every substitute which Satan produces for the pure truth. People who are not prepared to take or accept the way of the Cross in all its implications are carried away as by a flood when some beautiful lie is offered as a way to reach the same end. The Word of God makes it unmistakably clear that the Cross demands or postulates the setting aside of the whole race in Adam, and of man by nature; and that there is no hope for any, except as they are of the new creation in Christ Jesus.

### DISCRIMINATION AND SERIOUSNESS OF PURPOSE

A predisposition in the physical realm to any malady is often overcome by constitutional means. So it is in the spiritual.

In the physical body there is a wonderful system of testing (accepting or rejecting) food properties. The blood-stream performs the double function of bringing nourishment to each and every part of the body, and taking from it its waste products for elimination. Everything that is taken into the body is carried to the little doors, so to speak, or cells, and there it is challenged by the action of certain secretions. Such of the food

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as is found to have nutritive qualities is accepted, broken down, and transmuted into vital tissue and nerve-fuel. If there are useless or poisonous elements, they are—in a healthy body—rejected. A battle may ensue for their ejection, and some consciousness of this battle may be registered in the person concerned. The point for the moment is, that in the matter of food there is required a basic vitality by which values are discerned, determined, and turned into the thought, the speech, the action, and the nature of the individual. On the other hand, the harmful elements, and that which is lacking in value, will be perceived and rejected. Thus in the case of the believer, how important it is that for building up there should be a real vitality in relation to food.

So then, real life means appetite and discrimination, leading to strength and capability. But it is also necessary to take an initial serious attitude toward the food question. We can through carelessness fail to give the inner man what he needs, and just allow him to be served up with mere pleasantries in spiritual truth. Let us recognise that he *must have* wholesome and really nutritious food, and we should give ourselves definitely to seeking this out. The essence of nourishment is Christ Himself. Therefore the test of everything is whether it really ministers Christ to us. Not. How much more do we know? or. Have a pleasant sensation, but How is it possible to grow in the measure of Christ?

T. A-S.

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS  
ELEPHANTS AND ZEBRAS

AMONG those who found difficulties with our new 'zebra crossings' were two elephants who arrived in this country just as the black and white stripes appeared on the streets for the first time.

The elephants came off their ship at the London Docks, and were then due to walk all the way to Regent's Park. In order to avoid trouble with the busy traffic, the party did not leave the docks until early evening. All who took part knew well that they were going to have a long and tedious walk through several miles of London's streets, but nobody was prepared for what actually happened.

The leading elephant reached the first zebra crossing, all bright with its newly painted stripes, and nothing would induce her to pass over it. She stopped and eyed the black and white sections with the utmost suspicion. Her keeper did his best to assure her that it was quite safe, first coaxing and then urging, but all in vain. Whether the elephant thought that it was an unsafe bridge or whether she feared a trap, no one can say, but clearly she was full of doubts as to whether it was wise to entrust her great weight to it. Men and women might walk over the crossing quite easily, but an elephant is different and has to take great care. This looked neither strong nor secure. But at last, and after much persuasion, she made up her mind to risk it. Very slowly and with great caution she gradually tried a white stripe with one of her great forefeet. It did not fall in, so she moved the next foot forward, also on a white stripe. This, too, was all right, so on she went. It was with a sigh of relief that those in charge saw the elephant pass safely

over, walking only on the white portions.

After this the second elephant came up to the crossing, and exactly the same thing happened, only with a difference. This elephant, too, was very loth to venture on the stripy track, which looked to her as if it had great gaps in it. At last, though, she edged carefully on to it, testing it very gingerly first with one foot and then with the other—but in this case she kept strictly to the black stripes!

It had taken quite a few minutes to get over this one crossing, and it is quite likely that the policeman at the head of the procession was doing frantic sums in his head, trying to guess how many zebra crossings they would have to pass over in the course of the journeying, and wondering how many hours would be added to their slow progress if this long delay were repeated each time. There was no need to worry, however, for there were no more delays. Each elephant passed over all the rest of the crossings without any further hesitation. But there was just this one difference between them. Whereas the first elephant would only step on the white stripes every time, the second was seen to keep strictly to the black.

The reason seems clear. The first had proved that the white parts were trustworthy; they would bear her weight. She therefore took no further risks, but walked boldly on the colour which she had proved. It so happened that the second elephant had tried the black stripes first. She had found them worthy of trust, so that for her part she resolved to keep strictly to that colour, and to have nothing to do with the white ones.

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What lessons can we learn from this quaint happening? The first, surely, is that we can only prove the Lord by trusting Him for ourselves. The elephants were not satisfied with human attempts to convince them that it was all right. They took the trouble to test the crossing for themselves. Slowly perhaps, but nevertheless surely, they put their whole weight on the zebra crossing, and found that it really could bear them up safely. So we must trust the Lord Jesus for ourselves, committing our whole life to Him, that we may prove how safe and secure we shall be. That is what is meant by "whosoever believeth *on* Him" (John 3. 16).

But the real lesson seems to come from the way in which each elephant kept so closely to the colour which she had proved—the first to the white and the second to the black stripes. After the first delay there was never any more question; from then onwards each knew that she could keep on trusting that which had once been proved. It is true that the elephants had no need to choose between the colours, but they didn't know that. The point is that they kept steadfastly to what they had proved.

Unhappily Christians do not behave like this with the Lord Jesus. It may be understood that we should be a bit slow to trust Him at first. We have to venture our whole life on His faithful Word, and prove for ourselves how very worthy of trust He is. After this, though, there should be no more delays and no more questions. What a dreadful journey it would have been if the elephants had repeated their distrust at every crossing! No, they had more sense than that. But what do we do? When we come up to a new test or difficulty, do we question and wonder and doubt? Do we find it so hard to commit ourselves to the Lord? Do we begin all over again to feel uncertain as to whether it is safe to trust Him wholly? I am afraid that we often do. This brings such a sad delay in our Christian lives, with so much indecision and so little progress.

The elephants set us an example. Once we have found the Lord trustworthy we ought to go steadily on our way, always knowing that He who did not fail us before will never fail us now. "As therefore ye received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him" (Colossians 2.6).

H. F.

## THE SAFEGUARD OF CORPORATE LIFE

(Extract from an address)

*Reading: Eph. i. 15 - 19; iii. 1. 14 - 21; iv. 1 - 3; Phil. iii. 8-11*

**WE** never really know the Lord in fulness apart from one another. The Lord safeguarded the Apostle from an independent way right at the beginning. Everything with Paul was experience; it was not theory. He was broken of his Judaism by experience—not because he read up Christianity and decided it was better. The acts of God broke him free from it. He burst free from it by another life. He knew the meaning of death and resurrection by dying and rising again. He knew the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus by being subdued under Him. Later, he became, in actual experience, "the prisoner of the Lord"—not the prisoner of Nero. It was the Lord who strategically put him in prison.

And so experimentally the Apostle discovered—but long before he ever was an Apostle—that after all he was only part of something. He only knew a little of the Lord: if he were *really* to know the Lord, he would need all the other saints. When

he had had that breaking in of the Lord on the Damascus road, it was a simple brother who came to him and said. "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus . . . hath sent me" (Acts ix. 17). Paul did not say, 'I don't know you; I have seen the Lord!' He needed the saints; he could not get on without the saints. He could not even get on alone with the Lord. So he began to know the meaning of the Church. The very day he was baptized, the very day his eyes were opened, he began to realise he was only a member of a great Body: he was a member of Christ and his Lord was Head and the whole Church was His Body. How diminutive he became in his own eyes when he saw the Church! How unimportant our little knowledge of the Lord becomes when we see how great He is, and what a great fact the Church is!

And that brings us to this. Paul says, "I pray for you"—saints who have a living faith in the Lord Jesus, saints who do love one another—"that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him" (Eph. i. 17). The word here is



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a special word—'the full knowledge'. Do we want a full, adequate knowledge of the Lord? Do we want the Lord as He really is? Or do we want to go round and round our own little knowledge of the Lord and think, 'Well, I have got it!' The Apostle Paul is able to say, "Not as though I had already attained . . . but I follow after . . ." (Phil. iii. 12). He has only begun to know the Lord, and he says to the saints, 'You have only begun to know!'

If there is to be a full knowledge of Him, it will be in relation to something more than your own personal life. Here is a full Christ; here is the One who "filleteth all in all". (Eph. i. 23). Christ fills all things, and He is the Head of the Body, the Church, which is His fulness. In order to know Christ in fulness, you will discover that the whole thing is a matter of relatedness—no longer independence. "That ye may be . . . strong to apprehend *with all the saints* what is the breadth and length . . ." (Eph. iii. 18). Are you beginning to apprehend with all saints or are you still trying to apprehend by yourself? Are you living on your own desert island with your Bible and trying to apprehend? You will not get very far. The more we begin to apprehend of the full knowledge of Him, the less we think we know. The effect of isolation is to make us think we *do* know. The effect of corporate life is to make us think we know nothing—and yet that is called 'full knowledge'. Full knowledge is humiliating. Immature knowledge is an exalted, self-important thing.

What is the secret of knowing the Lord in corporate life? Well Ephesians iv. 2 tells us—"with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love". You remember the words of the Lord Jesus in Matthew xi—"Learn of me: for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls". The knowledge of the Lord is always bound up with meekness and lowliness, and we can never learn Christ, who is meek and lowly in heart, apart from being actually placed with other saints with whom our relationships have to be made. Our life has to be related to others before we can know anything about meekness or lowliness. You cannot be meek and lowly by yourself! The whole matter is never raised when we are by ourselves, and a thing that is not raised remains untouched.

One root of our being is pride. We are all proud: the most humble-looking people are often prouder than others. It is the very spirit of him who said, 'I will be exalted!' (Isa. xiv. 13, 14). We never know that that thing is in us until the Spirit starts

dealing with us. We find others having a place when we think we are more suited for it. Oh, the wickedness of the throne of iniquity. The hand of Amalek is against the Throne of God. Oh, that that throne of iniquity might be destroyed! To find it in ourselves is appalling. How does the Lord get rid of Amalek? "The Lord hath sworn: the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation" (Ex. xvii. 16). How does He deal with Amalek?

By the amazing provision of *life together*—and I mean, by that, life intimately together, not 'going to church'. You can go to church and sit in rows but that is not corporate life. Corporate life is when your life has to be related in a practical way in the things of God and perhaps even in what we call practical things, where there is a give and take and a play going on. Things are happening among one another, and immediately Amalek begins to come up. Some of us have noticed what happens when the Lord brings a child of His into corporate life. Perhaps he comes in full and bubbling over with his own life; but just wait a week or two and the invisible old man comes to light. Before long that life is up against another life and is not quite so happy as it was before. The Lord will find out Amalek in the Church. The corporate life is a dreadful thing for the natural man, for Amalek.

And so, if we are to really know the Lord, we shall be brought into the necessity of corporate life, the necessity of knowing not only the Lord in heaven but the Lord in one another. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John xiii. 35). Love to one another is fairly simple if we live far enough apart; but let us be rubbed together and see how it works. All the nature in us that wants to *be something* is smitten again and again. We are only at the beginning of it, all of us, but even Paul felt like that. "I follow after"! 'I do want to be dealt with!' And he found, among the Apostles and amongst younger saints, that he was being dealt with. Oh, the patience needed to endure this process.

And what is the process? The Lord getting His glory. "Unto him be the glory in the church" (Eph. iii. 21): not unto Mr. Somebody. The whole traditional background of people is wiped out at one blow. There are no 'people'; there is one Person, and if a person in himself comes into the House of God, he is slain. No *man* can enter in.

We are not trying, at this time to preach doctrine. We do not want just to preach the doctrine of the Church. We shall come into the necessity of it. Are

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you finding your own independent life with the Lord, and your own independent ministry, drying up? You see, the Lord never meant that. We did not read on in Ephesians iv, but ministry comes up later, and we find that ministry is not our doing at all. We have not a ministry of our own, we have not a work of our own. Christ is the Head of the Church, and He gave some as Apostles and some as something else. *He* gave them all; *He* set them. They did not set themselves up and start doing something. The Lord set them; the Lord stooped down and picked them up.

And so—before the matter of what real minis-

try is comes up at all—we find that life together—shall we say the life of the Church—is not a matter of meetings and hearing helpful addresses. It is not first of all going to a place where you get lovely messages. It is having to live together, and learning those lessons which can only be learned in the one Body.

If we are really to come to know the Lord, we shall not know Him by ourselves. If we mean business, we shall come to a breakdown as to our own line of things, and we shall hate it and flee from it, and be thankful to be lost in the Church. May the Lord bring us there for His glory's sake!

C. J. B. H.

## THE WONDROUS WAYS OF GOD

*"Thy way was in the sea,  
And thy paths in the great waters,  
And thy footsteps were not known,  
Thou leddest thy people like a flock,  
By the hand of Moses and Aaron"*  
(Psalm lxxvii. 19, 20)

WHAT a strange juxtaposition of similes! It would be difficult to have a greater contrast than is presented in these two verses—the pilot through the sea, and the shepherd with his flock. The sea in a rage and an uproar, the tempest and the storm—and, right alongside of it, the shepherd and his flock. One a picture of unrest, disturbance, anxiety, stress, mighty forces in action; the other of tranquillity, restfulness, calm. What a contrast!—and yet brought together in one statement as to what the Lord is to His people—a pilot, a shepherd.

You need to read the whole psalm to get the full value of that. The first part of the psalm is a record of distress, perplexity, bewilderment, a crying out in trouble, reaching the agony of "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" "Is his loving-kindness clean gone for ever?"—questions about the Lord. And then the writer recollects and says, "This is my infirmity . . . I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High"; and the whole tone changes. Recollection and review, as to how it all worked out in the long run, brings reassurance, leading finally to this summary at the end. And yet it is only an introduction—because undoubtedly the last two verses of this psalm are an introduction to the next one, that great historic record of the Lord's dealings with His people—Psalm lxxviii. What a long psalm it is, recounting the movements of the Lord's people and the

Lord's guidance and dealings with them. The psalmist has worked up to that in this way. With all there is here for most helpful, encouraging, reassuring meditation, we can at the present time only look at the gist of the matter.

I am going to change the metaphor again, from the pilot through the storm, and the shepherd with his flock, to the mountaineer. There are three peaks which every child of God has to master—peaks that are suggested by this psalm. We are not really qualified for the service of the Lord, nor for life itself in relation to the Lord, until we have mastered these three peaks. They will challenge us; they may challenge us again and again; but somehow or other we have got to be the masters of them and they have got to be things that have lost their terror for us, have lost their dread, have lost that which makes them for us things that defeat and weaken.

### DIVINE PURPOSE GOVERNING ALL

The first of these peaks which arises out of this psalm so clearly is Divine purpose governing all. You know how this mountain presented itself to Israel at the beginning of their history. When the psalmist refers to 'His way in the sea' and 'His paths in great waters', what is he talking about? Undoubtedly about the Red Sea as it confronted them. What a terror, what a dread there was that night! We may picture how the East wind howled and the water lashed. What a dread that sea was to the people—with what fear and trepidation did they approach its bank! The waters piled up as a wall on the left and the right served little to abate their terror. It was a terrible night, the passing through

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the Red Sea. It was, in a sense, a veritable mountain to be negotiated—and a mountain of, for them, terrible possibilities. But do you notice what the psalmist says? He says (Ps. lxxvii. 16) that these waters were—well, our translation does not give us the exact word. They were troubled, they were in anguish, they were groaning, and the original word which is used to describe the state of the waters suggests that they were in travail, the sea was in travail, and the nation was born in that sea that night. A nation was born in the Red Sea that night, and the waters were in anguish. It is a picture.

You see Divine purpose working in the tempest : behind the fear, the terror, all that seemed so awful that night. Divine purpose was governing, producing a nation, bringing a nation to birth—"paths in the great waters". That is one thing that we have sooner or later to settle, that the raging, the terror, the dread, the threatening, the thing that seems to mean our undoing, is being governed by Divine purpose to produce something of very great value to the Lord. The recollection of this saved the psalmist when he was crying out with those questions—"Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Is his lovingkindness clean gone for ever?" The psalmist was in a state of distress, I think he was expressing the state of the people at that time, and wondering whether the Lord had not forsaken His people altogether and left them. Then he says, 'Let us look back—let us go back to our beginning as a nation. Were we not born in a threat? Did we not begin our history in what seemed to speak destruction? Was it not in the most terrible tempest that we, by the mighty power of God, came out His people, delivered, saved, set apart?' That recollection saved the psalmist in his hour, and we too have to reach the place where we say, with every new tempest, raging, threat, dread, fear, onslaught, whatever it is—God has something in this ; purpose governs.

But then that involves something else, carries something else with it.

## DIVINE WISDOM DICTATING

The second mountain peak is this—Divine wisdom dictating. It is not only that there is purpose which is the end, but that there is wisdom dictating the way to the end. The psalmist looked back and saw, and said to himself, 'Ah! at the time we could see no wisdom of God at work, the way we were going seemed to be such a confused way, a

contradictory way, everything seemed to be anything but the dictating of Divine wisdom ; but now I can see: God chose the way, the method, the means which He knew would most effectively reach His end, and we have to negotiate that mountain.' It does seem so strange, the way the Lord goes. What is the Lord doing? Why? All the questions come up. But wisdom is dictating the way to the end.

## DIVINE LOVE CONTROLLING

And then, Divine love controls. It controls the end, the way, the motive—yes, the Pilot ; but He is not a disinterested detached pilot, just doing his job without any heart-relationship to the people in his care. The metaphor changes at once, as though to say, 'Ah, there is something more in it than that. God is not just negotiating through difficulties in a cold, detached way. He is a Shepherd.' And if there is one picture in the Bible of a heart-relationship to others, it is the picture of the shepherd. God's heart is bound up with His people, and the psalmist says an interesting thing here. 'Thy way was in the sea, and thy paths in great waters, and thy footsteps were not known.' What does he mean?

Go back again, after it is all over, to the other side of the Red Sea. The wind has quieted down, and the tempest has come to rest. You look to see where His 'footprints' are, and you cannot find them. You cannot say, 'He did it like this and that'. You cannot find out just how He did it. The fact is that He did it, and that is all ; you cannot explain, define, mark it out. The psalmist is saying—'That is how God does things'. He does the most wonderful things—things which involve the whole question of life and death for us ; and when He has done them, you just cannot see any trace of how He did it—but it was done. Do we not have to say that? We come up against a situation like the Red Sea, and say, 'How are we going to master this? What is the Lord going to do with this one?' He just does it. We look back, again and again, and say, 'The Lord has done it, but how, I do not know'. "Thy footsteps were not known." You cannot trace out how the Lord does things, but He does them. He brings the mighty tempest to serve His end, by His wisdom, in His love, because He is the Shepherd of His flock—because His heart is bound up with them, *It matters to Him about us.*

T. A-S.



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## RESPONSIBILITY FOR WHAT WE HAVE

"They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them. If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, if one rise from the dead." Luke xvi. 19, 31

THAT is a strange parable or illustration that our Lord gave about the rich man and the poor man and their places and conditions after having passed from this life! How much speculative teaching has been read into or made out of it! And yet, in truth, the Lord was not propounding a doctrine of life after death. Anything in that connection was quite incidental.

What He was really touching, as the context shows, is the matter of responsibility. Whenever He came into touch with the existing traditional religious system this was the issue which He deliberately raised and pressed. If the after-this-life factor does have a place in the above story—and it certainly does—it is this factor of responsibility which dominates the situation.

The Rich Man represents those who

1. Have had every facility and possibility of obtaining a wealth of the things of God:
2. Have accumulated all that information, or a great deal of it:
3. Have, by reason of it, come to a place of spiritual complacency, smugness, and contentment, or even pride and superiority.

4. Have not grown spiritually although so well provided for

5. Have failed to realise that every bit of spiritual provision is a trust; it must not stay with them, but must enrich the needy always at the gate, as represented by the Beggar—the sufferer, the suppliant, the hungry.

There is no need to spend many words in order to try to make the Lord's meaning clear. It just amounts to this.

A. Have we available to us those Divine resources, those riches of Christ, those ministries—personal or printed—which are intended by God to make us spiritually wealthy and of Christly stature?

B. If so, are they just *things* to us, 'teachings', subjects, themes, 'lines of truth', Christian tradition, interesting and informative treatises, etc.

How much are we *really* 'growing thereby'?

C. What is the interest value to the Lord who gave them? Do they stay at us, or is 'our profiting' the gain of others? Not the passing on of truth as such, but the value of our life with the Lord!

The Lord has been strong, almost severe in His warning that a very big responsibility lies at the door of everyone who is in touch with His Divine resources, and that what has issued from them will find us out in eternity.

T. A-S.

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*Continued on next page*



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## UNION WITH CHRIST

(continued)

### VI. VITAL AND ORGANIC UNION

"Every one . . . that doeth righteousness is begotten of him" (1 John ii. 29).

" . . . who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (1 John i. 13).

"Of his own will he brought us forth [begat he us, A.V.] by the word of truth" (James i. 18).

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John iii. 3).

And of course the whole of John xv should be placed there. "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me . . .", and so on.

"As newborn babes, long for the spiritual milk which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation" (1 Peter ii. 2).

" . . . but speaking truth in love, may grow up in all things into him, who is the head, even Christ" (Ephesians iv. 15).

**T**HERE will be no new profundities of truth delved into in what follows, and to many it will perhaps seem like coming back to the most elementary things, the very beginnings, of the Christian life, but I feel that it is very necessary for us to take nothing for granted. We who may know these things, and may have known them for a long time, will be the better for constant refresher courses in such matters, to help us to remember these basic truths and basic laws of our

life and growth. There being such a large proportion of younger people among our readers, who are undoubtedly seeking the way of the quickest entrance into spiritual fulness, who are concerned to get on in the spiritual life just as quickly as possible, I think this word may prove helpful to them. At least it will be a re-emphasis upon things which it is so necessary always to keep in mind.

### THE SEED-PRINCIPLE

Now the principle of being and growing is life. The means and method of being and growing is a seed, with life in it, in which the whole organism of its kind exists. That is, indeed, the principle upon which God has constructed the greater part of his animate creation. It is not a machine—it is an organism. It is not made to run and go by artificial means or external energies. Of course, it requires food from outside, but it must have life in order to feed. It is sustained by life in itself. The seed of every species has, within itself, all that characterizes the particular organism. The particular nature of that species, its shape, its size, its colour, its form, its features, its capacities, are all there in the seed where the life is. Of course, that is the wonder of nature. It is an amazing thing: just a seed with its tiny germ of life in it, and then, when grown, developed and in full expression, coming true to type in all its features. It is a mar-

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vellous thing. That is God's method of being and growing. It is all there.

## (a) BEGETTING

We have read passages in which the word 'begotten' is used concerning certain people, a certain type of creation, 'begotten of God'. The seed, the fertilising principle, is the Word of God, and the life is the Spirit of God, who is the Spirit of life. Within the Word of God—of course specifically within the Word of truth in the Scriptures, but in anything that God says, that really comes from God to us—there are contained all the wonderful possibilities, potentialities, of what is of God, of what is like God, of God's nature, of God's mind, of God's features, of all the dimensions to which God would bring a life; the very shape of the life which God would produce. It is all there when God speaks. When God says something, and His Word falls into suitable ground and has that corresponding answer of fertilising faith, it is all potentially there. (You will remember that it was said of some that the Word spoken profited them nothing, not being mingled with faith in them that heard it (Heb. iv. 2), so that there was no begetting. There are always two sides to this matter, but we are not going to be too detailed and analytical. Some things will have to be taken for granted.) But when God says something and sees in us a response, an answer back to God, all that wonderful fulness of Divine meaning, intention, possibility, kind, order, shape, size and everything else, is there in what God has said. Something has happened and wonderful possibilities exist. It is possible, of course, for God to come with His Word, with all the mighty potentialities of begetting, and for nothing to happen because of our attitude, but, given the response, given the counterpart of faith, and anything within the compass of Divine intention and conception is possible.

Now I am stressing this very much because I feel that we have become too familiar with hearing the truth of God. So often nothing happens. We have not sufficiently recognised the tremendous things that are bound up with the Lord speaking to us. If the Lord has said anything to you, be very careful that you give heed, that you do not let that go, that you do not despise that. God does not come for nothing with such an object in view, and with such tremendous possibilities: He is not playing with us. It is the most solemn as well as the most glorious thing, in possibility and prospect, if, and when, the Lord speaks to us. Do believe that, You see, within His speaking, within

His Word, there is all the possibility of God coming into expression.

I have illustrated this before in days gone by by the seed merchant who has a double window to his shop. On one side of the door, he has the seeds and the bulbs to look at—very uninteresting-looking, unpromising things. There is nothing attractive in their appearance; you do not want to take out your artist's palette and make paintings of seeds and bulbs. But, on the other side of his window, he has the full flower—the flower fully developed in its exquisite colours and wonderful form and he says, '*This is that; all this is in that*'. That is the marvel of living things.

And when God speaks, all that is of God is there in that speaking, and when you and I get to glory and are glorified together with Him, He will only say, '*This is that. You gave heed to something I said, and this is the result. I spoke to you: you received, you obeyed, you gave diligence: well, this is that—this is not something extra; it is just that*'. Do believe, do remember, that the Lord is constantly wanting to speak and to speak in the nature of a begetting—the bringing into being of an organism which is produced in heaven and has all heavenly features in it.

But of course this is in the power and custodianship of the Spirit of life. We have to receive the Spirit; the Spirit has to be in us to work out all these wonderful things in God's speaking. If we have the Spirit of God within, as we should do, or if the Spirit of God is accompanying the Word to us before we have actually received Him within: if the Spirit of God works upon that Word, then the purpose of God is realised. For us as Christians, it is most important that when we hear what God has to say we should be in the Spirit. It is most important that, when you go to meetings, if God should speak, you should be in the Spirit. You should take every measure to see that you are in the Spirit, that there is nothing there hindering the Spirit, nothing of which you know grieving the Spirit, working against the Spirit of God: because nothing is going to happen if that is so. With all the hearing, nothing will happen. But, being in the Spirit, all the mighty possibilities of God are taken up by the Spirit of God to be made real.

In this begetting, there may be a period of hidden activity, when we do not know what is happening, and perhaps we cannot sense anything happening; but God has spoken, and something *has* happened: we have answered. For the moment, for the time being, we do not know that anything is taking place, but it will come to light. Presently there will be a sensing that God has done



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something. That period may be longer or shorter, but it will surely be known that God has said something and God in saying something *did* something, started something, and His work will be manifested, something will be going on secretly. That is the meaning of being 'begotten of God'.

### (b) BIRTH

That leads us, of course, to the next step. Many people have confused these two things—begetting and birth. They are not the same, either in nature or in grace. Birth—what is birth? Birth is the point at which manifestation begins, when what God has been doing begins to show itself, comes out into manifestation: life manifested now in some Divine organism, a new life, a new order of things.

I wonder if you have followed what I have been saying. You see, it is like this so often in the early part of the Christian life. God says something, and His Spirit is with us in the saying, and we make a response. Then, for the moment, we do not know that anything very much has happened. But something has happened. Sooner or later—it may be very soon, almost simultaneously with the act of God in us, or it may be after a period of secret operation within, and faith is being tested as to whether anything has happened at all—something comes out, and we find that we just cannot do what we did before, and we have now got to do things we never did before, and our way of thinking and speaking is becoming challenged and changed and transformed. We find that some new order has come into being, and *it* is making all the differences, and we are able more and more clearly and definitely to draw the line between what was and what is now, what we were and what we are now. That is the course of the normal Christian life: that this new thing has now begun to manifest itself, and we are aware that something new has been born, and we just cannot be what we were, we just cannot do what we did: we are behaving in new ways: something has come from another world: a new beginning has been made. It is a new organism altogether. "If any man is in Christ, there is a new creation" (II Cor. v. 17).

The main point about a constitution of a particular kind is that it begins to manifest its kind. That is birth—something of a particular kind. "Except one be born anew [or "from above"] he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John iii. 3). The kingdom of God is a kind of order, a nature of things: not just a sphere, a place, but how things are done with God, in God's realm of things:

what is fitting to God's realm, suitable to God's realm; how things happen and work in God's realm. And this new organism shows the nature of what is born in God's realm. Well, sometimes a little baby does act like a monkey, but normally it acts like a human being! I mean, it conforms to type. Some baby Christians act very strangely, but it is not long before you begin to realise that they are of another mould, everybody else begins to realise they are of another order, a new kind of being has been brought into manifestation, and now quite spontaneously they act according to their species, a heavenly order. That is being born from God—a manifestation of something, the bringing to light of something. That is very elementary, but it is testing.

### (c) GROWTH

And if that is true as to the beginnings, then it must be true, increasingly true, in the matter of growth, following begetting and birth. Here a few quite simple but very vital things have to be noted.

#### (1) CHRIST IMPARTED

What is the principle and the basis of the growth of this heavenly organism, begotten of God, born from above? Well, the principle of growth is, from beginning to end, Christ imparted. All the Scriptures as the Word of God centre in Christ. So is the begetting, the birth and the growth, all related to Christ. It is Christ imparted. Any ministry claiming to be the Word of God, which does not centre in Christ, will not have God's effect. It is very important always to keep Christ to the fore if you are going to have God's ends reached: because from start to finish, initially, progressively and finally, God's object is the imparting of Christ—the imparting of Christ through the Word, by teaching, and the Holy Spirit working upon the Word, upon the teaching, concerning Christ.

It is something more than information about Christ. It is a ministration of Christ by the Spirit in the Word. I am quite sure you have learned, one way or the other—that is, negatively or positively, by failure or by success—you have learned that if you neglect the Word of God, if you neglect the ministry of the Word, your spiritual life is going to fall away, your spiritual growth is going to be stultified, arrested. If your Bible is kept to the fore all the time—I do not mean that you are reading it all day and night, but that it has the foremost place, so that if you can by any

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means get some few minutes with the Word of God you are after it—that is the way of growth, the way of the Spirit, the way of spiritual formation. Neglect the Word and neglect the ministry of Christ, and you lose out spiritually.

That is very elementary, but it is true. If Satan can raise up any excuse for your Bible remaining closed and out of hand, if he can fill your hands and your mind and your time with anything to keep you from the Word of God or from the ministry of the Word, he will do it. He is out to cut clean across your growth spiritually, because it is the increase of Christ. It is against the increase of Christ that he is set.

Take that quite solemnly. I say you prove it one way or the other. We have all proved it. We know that if we lose the ministration of the Word we lose our spiritual life. Christ is ministered to us for growth. And what is true of the Word is equally true of prayer: because, although we make prayer nine-tenths a matter of trying to get the Lord to serve our convenience, to be at hand just to give us the things we want, the real meaning of prayer is that we truly receive the Lord, we receive Christ. If we are seeking Christ in prayer, prayer will have a wonderfully refreshing, renewing, strengthening ministry. How often, in the weariness, the terrible weariness, of the way, when it seems impossible to drag on any farther, if we just get away quietly for a few minutes with the Lord and draw in prayer upon Him—'Lord, I need You, I need strength, I need renewal'—how refreshed we are. It is so. If only we would make prayer more a matter of a ministry of Christ to us—not of asking for a lot of things that will make our lives a bit easier and more pleasant, but the increase of Christ—! The Holy Spirit works on that. He responds to that.

So then, growth is a ministry of Christ through the Word—the teaching, the instruction, the ministry—and through prayer.

## (2) CHRIST ASSIMILATED

But then there is something further. After you have taken your meal, it may do you no good—it may do you a lot of harm. Food is not everything. There is such a thing as assimilation, and this is where the enemy usually scores. If he cannot stop us from the one thing and the other, the Word and the prayer, he will make frantic efforts to break in here. We must therefore make sure that, whatever has to be suspended for it, we do have at least a brief time for dwelling on the impartation, dwelling on Christ, dwelling on the Word.

That means an inward attitude. If you take food, and you have not, as it were, the right inward attitude toward that food, it does not do you any good. There is a complaint which has to do with what is called the pancreas, and if the pancreas is not functioning properly the food does not nourish the body. You can take as much as you like but it does not do any good. You can eat and eat, but the food does not profit the body. You need something to stimulate or restore the function of the pancreas. You know what I mean—this assimilation business, this inward attitude that draws upon the Word, draws upon the Lord, that dwells upon Him, just a few minutes perhaps in a day, but a quiet time of assimilation. That is the way of growth. You may come through eleven meetings of a conference, and what a heap of stuff you get, and it may profit you not a little bit. There is enough in one meeting to carry us a very long time, to accomplish a very great deal of spiritual growth; and yet it may effect nothing at all. What do you do about it? Do you lay hold inwardly? Is your attitude, 'I must have this! If this can help my spiritual life and growth, I lay hold of this, I break this up!'—do you take this attitude? It is essential to growth. Growth is organic, it is vital.

## (3) CHRIST KNOWN

And then, in the third place, growth is by Christ known—what the New Testament calls spiritual understanding. The Holy Spirit, working through the Word, working through prayer, working through our meditation, would bring us into an intelligence concerning the Lord, so that we are able to say, 'Yes, I heard that, I received that; I have laid hold of that, I have been exercised over that; but I understand now, I see the meaning, the importance, the value: I see'. And there is a great deal connected with spiritual understanding in our spiritual growth. You know how true that is shown to be in the Word. Even one who had seen so much, and been given so much; who could say, 'Well, coming to visions and revelations of the Lord, I knew a man about fourteen years ago caught up into heaven, shown unspeakable things not lawful for a man to utter' (II Cor. xii. 1-4): even such a man, who had had all that and much more, could say, as his life, his course here, was coming to an end, "that I may know him"—that is still my ambition'. It is growth by knowledge.

And that man wrote, as we know so well, to those who had some fairly rich impartation of Divine ministry—for consider how long Paul was at Ephesus. He said concerning his ministry: "I

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shrank not from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God" (Acts xx, 27). What a lot he had given those Ephesian believers! And yet he says, in writing to them at last, toward the end: "I . . . cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him" ('the full knowledge of Him' is the word used): "having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe" (Eph. i. 15-19). There is something in knowing, in seeing, in understanding. It is the way of enlargement, the way of growth.

Of course, that is normal in a normal human

being. We grow, and as we grow our understanding increases, and as our understanding increases so we grow. Spiritual understanding works both ways. It is a grand thing to find Christians, and even young Christians, who are getting to know the Lord—not just living on addresses and externalities, but themselves growing in the knowledge of the Lord.

All this is certainly vital union with Christ, and it is certainly organic. It is a matter of life, and it is a way of life, and it is all a matter of our union with our Lord. That is what provides it, that is what provokes it, that is what stimulates it, that is what begins it, that is what maintains it, that is what completes it. So you may come to John xv, and you have it all there. 'In Me': 'abide in Me': 'in Me bear fruit': 'abide in Me, bear much fruit': and so it goes on. It is all "in Christ".

T. A.-S.

## PRESSING ON FOR THE PRIZE

*"Brethren, I count not myself yet to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians iii, 13, 14).*

WHEN Paul was pressed into journeying over to Macedonia, he little realised what great spiritual values lay in the city of Philippi. For him it must have been a time of extreme bewilderment. There seemed to be no way open for his ministry. The Spirit forbade him to speak the word in Asia. When he made an attempt to move towards Bithynia, the Spirit of Jesus would not allow him to proceed. It must have appeared very negative, with the Lord only saying 'No' to all his plans and prayers. But God is never negative. He only checks and restrains because He has some better thing in view. At last the apostle discovered a way of life. When all his own ideas and plans had been rejected, when he was brought to a standstill, then the vision of the man of Macedonia gave him the clue to the Lord's direction.

What a wonderful sphere then opened up to him! He not only moved into a new continent: he entered into a much richer phase of spiritual ministry. And of all the churches which came into being as a result of this move, there was none to be compared with Philippi. It is very clear that the saints

of that city were a great comfort and joy to the apostle, as indeed they must have been a real joy to the Lord. How often must Paul have thanked God for checking and disappointing him when he had so strongly tried to work in Asia. How thankful he must have felt, too, that he had obeyed the Spirit. If Paul had forced matters, as we are often tempted to do: if he had brushed aside the Spirit's restraints and just pushed on: he would have missed Philippi, and nobody knows how great a loss that might have been. It may be that we also have been knowing disappointments and apparent frustration. And it may be that the Lord now wishes to reveal to us His purpose in His strange dealings with us. He sets before us that which is of supreme importance, the prize. Let us be careful not to miss it.

### A SPIRITUAL MAN'S AMBITION

As we read this letter to the Philippians, we get the impression of great confidence and intimacy between the writer and the readers. The love and understanding are such that the apostle is able to disclose his own deepest thoughts and desires. Many people would have misunderstood him. They might have thought that he was claiming some spiritual superiority or special privileges. The Philippians, however, would not do this. They would sympathize with his aspirations. Indeed they would share them. They would feel that this 'prize'



## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

of which Paul wrote must be something of supreme importance. It evidently was to him, and he sought that it should be for all the people of God. One cannot but feel that when the letter had been read to the assembled church it must have clarified their vision, challenging every earthly and unworthy motive, and revealing the great goal for the redeemed. They, too, were destined for the prize, and must bend all their spiritual energies to obtain it.

Paul was a man of great spiritual attainment. Yet he confessed that there was something more. The Philippians were fine, spiritual Christians, some of the very best; and yet the apostle was clearly not satisfied with them either. This should cause us to think. What is this prize, which ought to be gained, but which may be lost?

### WHAT THE PRIZE IS NOT

Perhaps it will help us if we first consider what the prize is not. Of course it is not salvation; that hardly needs to be said. Paul was so assured of everlasting life that it mattered little to him whether he lived or he died. He was not reaching out for the satisfying of personal needs at all. They were fully provided for in Christ. He could say, "I have all things, and abound" (iv. 18). Yet he still stretched out eagerly for the spiritual prize.

#### (1) PERSONAL POSITION

This could not have been concerned with his own personal position or apostleship. Most of us would truly covet to be an apostle Paul. If we had anything like the position which he held among the people of God, we should feel that all our highest ambitions were realised. But this is not the prize. It is one of the perils of our day, this wanting to be a great figure among the Lord's people, to be given a prominent place in Evangelical circles. When we first turned our back on the world, we probably decided that we wanted no place for ourselves. We were willing to be just nothing, so long as Christ should be magnified. But, all too subtly, those personal ambitions are apt to grow up again, often disguised as being for the glory of the Lord. The truth is that we want to enjoy the praise of men. We say, and perhaps we think, that we want it all for the Lord, but the fact remains that we are pressing on towards a goal which after all is earthly and personal. We seek a position among men.

Paul already had this position. He was outstanding and pre-eminent in the work of the Gospel. He was the great apostle of the nations. He could have been even more popular if he had

cared to compromise a little. But to him this was certainly not the prize; and neither must it be to us.

#### (2) PERSONAL POSSESSIONS

Neither was it a question of blessings or possessions which he had been able to gain, even in the things of God. Paul confessed that at heart he had been an ambitious man, a man who grasped for the best of everything. In his early days his one desire had been to outstrip all his fellows, to know more than they, to have the satisfaction of selfish gain, even in spiritual matters. He was one to lay hold of everything, to give up nothing. This spirit is, of course, the exact opposite of the Spirit of Christ, so we can dismiss from our minds the idea that the prize is in any way associated with it. If we are becoming self-centred in spiritual things, and if the chief point of our concern is the blessing which we receive, then we are certainly not pursuing this prize. God does not regard the acquisition of knowledge and gifts as a worthy goal.

#### (3) SUCCESSFUL SERVICE

It may seem strange to us, but we need to realise that even successful spiritual ministry must never be an end in itself. When Paul wrote these words he was near the end of his ministry. The Lord had wrought wonders through him, using him in a remarkable way to sinners and to saints. But ministry was not his prize. God forbid that it should become ours. It is in this realm of ministry that so many snares lie. We enjoy speaking or working. We feel that we have been given a gift in the realm of ministry, and should concentrate upon exercising it. There is a certain fascination associated with public speaking, and while we would never admit even to ourselves that this is the case, successful ministry can easily become the governing motive of our life. This is capable of being tested. Let us be silent for a time. Let others take our place. How do we react? Can we rejoice in the fact that the Lord is using others? Can we be thankful that the work is being fulfilled in the power of the Spirit, even when we ourselves are prevented from having an active part in it? It is true that we must be faithful in our ministry; but what a tragedy if our grasping after ministry should lessen our pursuit of the heavenly prize, or, worse still, even become a hindrance in the race!

### THE TRUE PRIZE

There is only one attainment which can truly be called the prize. If the things which we have mentioned—position, possessions, success in service—

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are not the heavenly goal, we shall expect this letter to reveal what it is.

### THE SATISFACTION OF THE LORD

In the first place we must realise that the prize is not a human idea at all. It originated with the Lord. Paul called it "that for which I was apprehended by Christ Jesus" (iii. 12). When the Lord moved from heaven, stretching out His hand to arrest Saul of Tarsus, He knew very well what He wanted him for. So far as the Lord was concerned, there was a very definite end in view. At first Paul may have imagined that this Divine purpose was concerned with his work as an evangelist and as a missionary. It is true that his service for the Lord was always in view, and that he was indeed apprehended for a most important spiritual ministry. But by the time that this letter was written, the greater part of his work here on earth was already completed. Paul had the joy of knowing that he had done really great things in the service of the Lord. Yet he also knew that the goal had not yet been reached: even now he might not gain the prize.

From the very first Christ had had a destination in view for Paul. He had taken hold of Paul, apprehended him, in order that this particular purpose might be fulfilled. He had kept the apostle aware of the fact that, however important were immediate happenings, there was a larger and an eternal issue at stake all the time. The inward urge to press on was not the apostle's personal ambition to excel, but the unrelenting pressure of the Spirit within him, who would not accept anything for him less than the "upward calling" (iii. 14). If the prize mattered to Paul, it mattered far more to the Lord who had called him to possess it. It is not a matter of how satisfied we are with our attainments. The great question is: What has the Lord in view for us, what is His goal?

In His prayer before Calvary, the Lord Jesus passed beyond our present experience and testimony in this world to the great climax of His asking, when He prayed: "Father, those whom thou hast given me, I will that, where I am, they also may be with me . . ." (John xvii. 24). His last words to the churches were: "He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne" (Rev. iii. 21). This, then, is the prize.

### THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST

In saying "as I also overcame", the Lord Jesus indicated that He Himself was the great Example

and Pioneer in relation to the prize. Philippians ii. 5-11 emphasizes this very point. It describes how the Man Christ Jesus came to the spiritual goal which has really satisfied the Father's heart: how in a full and lasting way He is destined to express the glory of God the Father. This setting forth of the emptying of the Son, of His humbling and obedience, and then of His exaltation, is not just for our admiration, but in order that we should enter into fellowship with Him. We, too, are to have the mind which was in Him, the mind whose one thought was to provide a life that would be wholly acceptable to the Father. In a sense this is the foundation of His greatest service. All that He did here on earth, and all that He now works from the glory, springs out of the kind of Person that He is: it is the expression of His own holy life. This mind led Him not to seek a position, but to let it go: not to acquire possessions, but to empty Himself: not only to take the form of a servant, but also to carry His life of obedience right through to its most costly outworking. This spirit is so in harmony with the Father's own nature that it has ensured for the Son the place of supreme authority at the heart and centre of all God's eternal and universal kingdom. But He is not intended to be there alone. He died on the Cross that there might be a people, of the same spirit, sharing the Throne with Him. Paul knew that this was his own calling. It was for this that he accepted the way of the Cross. This prize of the calling on high to the Throne is only to be obtained by fellowship with the crucified Lord. It is the outcome of an inward conformity to Christ.

### THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST

Paul willingly let go all that he would otherwise have valued in order to pursue this supreme end of conformity to Christ. "Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord . . ." (Phil. iii. 8). This "knowledge" of Christ must mean something more than 'knowing about' Christ. You do not have to pay the price which Paul paid to get information about Christ. You can do that by enquiry and study, Paul sought a different kind of knowledge from this. He sought to "gain Christ" (iii. 8): that is, to know the inward experience of being possessed by the resurrection life of the Lord Jesus. Such knowledge demands an entering into the "fellowship of his sufferings" and a "becoming conformed to his death" (iii. 10). The Throne is not a reward for Bible knowledge, nor is it given just for intensity and earnestness in Christian ser-

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vice; it is God's goal for a people in whom is found the very character of His Son. It is this kind of Man who alone can bring glory to God the Father.

For us there can surely be no greater prize than this: to bring real, lasting satisfaction to the heart of God. There can be no doubt as to the 'mind' which will do this, for it is the mind which was in Christ Jesus, leading Him to a life of utter abandonment to the will of the Father, at any cost and through every temptation and test. Paul assures us that he had accepted all the implications of fellowship with the Crucified, that the same mind might always be found in him too. The challenge comes to us also to be "thus minded" (iii. 15), for only so can the eternal desire of God for a reigning humanity be realised. The prize is to be like Christ: the destiny for such is the calling upward to the Throne.

### THE IMPORTANCE TO OTHERS OF THIS SPIRIT

There was nothing of rivalry or criticism of others in the apostle's expressed determination to press on. It is true that he implied that he would not be restrained by others. Whatever they did, or failed to do, he intended to press on, since the issues were far too important for him to take undue notice of other people's opinions or criticisms. It is most likely that Paul's critics objected to his concentration on the one great prize. They might have said that this involved separating himself from others of God's children, as though he were better than they, or wanted to be: that he was confusing

people with deep, spiritual teaching when it would have been much better to keep to the simple and elementary facts of the Gospel. How they misunderstood him! He had no interest at all in mere teaching. He had no desire at all to be different from other believers. But he was deeply concerned that the saints should reach God's goal. He shared with His Lord a heart burden that the people of God should really come to the Throne: that, whatever else they lost, they should not lose the prize.

We must make it our sincere desire, not only to press on ourselves, but that others should press on too. One of the great differences between this and other prizes is that we do not have to push others back in order to get on ourselves. We do not even have to hope that we will outstrip them. On the contrary, our greatest progress is made when we are forgetting ourselves in true concern for others.

If we truly press on, we become a testimony to the Lord's people concerning this great goal which is set before them. It is useless to have a mere teaching about 'overcoming', or about the upward call to reign with Christ. There is a tremendous need for people to meet with the living reality in human life and experience. They need a testimony which shall keep before them the supreme importance of the prize. Far from being a selfish matter, or an alternative to ministry, this is the very heart and essence of all true ministry—to see that men are conformed to Christ, and called on high to share the Throne with Him. Our best service to others, as well as to the Lord, is to pay the price of full obedience and to press on in the heavenly race.

H. F.

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRIST

### III IN RELATION TO HIS POWER

*"Seeing that Jews ask for signs, and Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto Jews a stumblingblock, and unto Gentiles foolishness; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians i. 22 - 24).*

*"And blessed is he, whosoever shall find no occasion of stumbling in me" (Matthew xi. 6).*

WITH most of you who read these lines, it would be altogether out of place to ask the question: Does Christ signify? For us, He signifies above all other and beyond all else in this universe. But we do just put that question forward in

order to draw our attention again, and to give a swift, almost instantaneous review of how immensely Christ has come to signify in this world. What an immense significance has arisen with the name of Jesus!—and not only amongst believers but in history. Does He signify? Well, that is answered by our hearts very strongly and finally, but we have to go further in our contemplation of what He signifies. What is His significance? In our previous studies we were seeking to see something of the significance of Christ in relation to the race as it is, and then to pass to the significance of Christ in relation to the race as God intended and intends it to be.



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### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DIFFERENCE OF CHRIST

That leads to the further question: How and why does He signify? I could answer that in what might be a somewhat abstruse, and would certainly be a very imperfect, way, but in a way nevertheless which would set us in the right direction of discovering this significance of Christ. I would say that the answer to the 'how' and the 'why' is found in the fact that He is so different—utterly different—from all the rest of mankind. That is how He signifies, and that is why He signifies. He is not only different, but He is of another order. Yes: very Man, true humanity, but of another order: and that other order was not perceivable on the outside as He moved amongst men. But that was the great, the basic, feature of His signification—there was that which was so completely different in order, in inward constitution.

Jesus was a stranger in this world—but not only a stranger. He was an enemy in this world; He was definitely up against this world, what was here, and His very presence was a provocation to it. It found Him a problem, a difficulty, and often unbearable—because "the whole world lieth in the evil one" (I John v. 19). The world was and is in the power of Satan, and in that realm His significance was fully recognised; so that a clash between Him, who was of another realm and another spiritual order, and this realm and this spiritual order, was inevitable.

### ISRAEL PECULIARLY IN THE POWER OF SATAN

Now, here is a very interesting and significant thing. While the whole world was in the power of Satan, the Jewish nation was peculiarly and particularly so. Here we touch one of those principles in the Divine order and economy. God has always had to have a representation of His thoughts. Israel was raised up to be a national representation of God's thoughts to the world, among the nations: to be the servant of God to make God's thoughts known. Israel failed. And it was not only that Israel *failed* in their calling, their great vocation. It was worse than that. Israel, like the first Adam, fell clean into the hands of Satan to be used to *mis*represent God and His thoughts: that is, to turn right round on their Divine calling and present exactly the opposite. As we said in our last study, Israel so fell into the hands of Satan that he could even use that nation against God, to kill the very Son of God Himself.

That was the corporate expression of exactly what took place in the individual in the Garden. Adam not only fell from his calling and the Divine intention. He went lower than that. He fell right into the hands of the devil, to be, himself and his seed, a misrepresentation of God's intentions and thoughts—to be the direct opposite of what God meant. That is Satan's work.

### THE LORD JESUS A STRANGER IN THIS WORLD

So, when He came into the world—He who, in His very constitution, was not of this world, but of another realm and another order—He was a stranger. "The world knew him not" (John i. 10). And He was an enemy: the world hated Him. John says both of those things. He tells the Church not to be surprised if the world does not know them—"the world knew him not": and not to be surprised if the world hates them—it 'hated Him before it hated them' (John xv. 18). Where does this come from? It is strange that you find this spontaneous hatred and alienation from Christ in the world. It is there naturally and they do not know why. Sometimes when you get down alongside of a person who has shown real objection, animosity or hatred, distance from Christ, and begin to talk to them quietly, they change altogether and do not know why they ever took that attitude. They become milder and more reasonable, and you can talk with them. So often that happens. They do not know why. Well, we know why. "The whole world"—ignorantly in very large degree—"lieth in the evil one" (I John v. 19).

Christ is a stranger in this world. "The world knew him not." That applied primarily to His Deity. The world knew Him not in His Deity: that of course is the great point of John's writings, the gospel and his letters—who Jesus Christ essentially was. The world knew Him not in that sense primarily: but that is true in a larger sense also. The world knew Him not in His true human nature. It did not know this kind of *man*. He is another kind of man—to them a very irritating man, a very annoying man, a very disturbing man. It was not simply because, from their standpoint. He was an upstart and a revolutionary and 'agin everybody'—no, not that. There is something about this man Himself that they cannot understand, they cannot fathom: they cannot cope with Him. They knew Him not in His real Manhood. He was at variance with their whole mentality. They were mentally constituted after a different order from what He was. Jesus was in conflict

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with the whole natural make-up of man as he is found on the earth since Adam: with man's thought-life, yes; but deeper than that—with man's motives, man's *un-thought-out* way of life. He was in conflict with it in its very essence, its uttermost depth. And from the other side, for that very reason, it was impossible for man on this earth to grasp and appreciate Him. He was so differently constituted in the very depths of His being—not in His thought-out philosophy of life, His creed, but in what He *was*. The natural man cannot grasp and appreciate Jesus.

And now we come very near home. *That is as true of you and of me as Christians as it is of non-Christians.* That is the basis of so large an amount of our trouble, and is the basis of all God's work with us: to create an entirely different mentality from what we are naturally, to bring about an altogether different constitution—not in our philosophy of life, but in the very springs of our being, in what comes up spontaneously, without thought, without premeditation. It is there that the work of the Spirit of God goes on. Christ and Christians can be just as much at variance as Christ and worldlings, because we Christians are still so much actuated by the world's ideas. Certainly organized Christianity, as it is called, proceeds along the lines of the world's ideas.

## THE QUESTION OF POWER THE ROOT OF THE DIFFERENCE

I come back to that point with which we were dealing earlier: the very root of this difference—the whole question of power. The natural man's ideas of power are as far removed from Jesus Christ as the heavens are removed from the earth. I said that this matter of power is the very root of all the trouble in this world, in the individual and in the whole race. The whole matter of power as an instrument in the hands of self sprang up with Satan. It brought that first mighty clash between God and that perhaps highest of His created beings—with what results, with what havoc, we are unable to measure. And then the same principle of power for personal use, power for personal 'being something', was insinuated into the race through Adam, when he fell to the temptation to have that power in himself and not in God. It is a very very far expansive reach that is gathered into that little phrase, that little clause, in Ps. lxii. 11: "*God hath spoken once, twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God*". It belongs to God. You take it from God into your own hands, and get away with it, and you get the far reach from

the poor iron cannon-ball to the atomic bomb. That looks like a tremendous advance in power. Take it out of God's hands, and see where it will land you. The very thing that you have clamoured for may be given. God seems to be giving—until it becomes your very doom. There is a terrible history bound up with this matter of power. "God hath spoken once, twice have I heard this, that power belongeth *unto God*."

Seeing, then, that there is such a mighty gap between the race, in its mentality about this, and the Lord Jesus, the necessity does arise for a new birth. We have to learn yet about the new birth. We have never comprehended one small fraction of what it means to be born again, or anew, or from above; born from another world, with that world's mentality. Now step back one step and we will come on to that again.

"To this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John iii. 8). The "works of the devil" are found concentrated in this word 'power'. He made a bid for that power which would put God out of His place. He caused man to do the same, and thus we have all this wrong, false and disastrous mentality about power.

## FEAR THE COMPANION OF THE QUEST FOR POWER

What is the, perhaps imperceptible, but very real thing which lies behind all the trouble in this world, all the 'nerves' of the individual or of the race? It is *fear*: fear of being overwhelmed, of being overcome, subjected, of going under, losing out—put it how you like—in many, many ways. It is fear that lies behind all this hankering and craving and working for power. Now look at the Lord Jesus. Was there ever a sign of fear in Him? Everything gathered round Him that would make for fear. His whole position, not only from his enemies' but from this world's standpoint, was a most precarious one. Nothing seemed naturally to be sure, to be safe. Indeed, everything conspired to become a tremendous threat to His security. His personal security, the security of His cause. But there is never the suggestion of a moment's fear. There is perfect confidence, assurance, tranquillity. He goes on quietly, unperturbed. That was the thing that made everybody wonder. They could not understand this Man, in His precarious position in the Judgment Hall, being so utterly tranquil, self-possessed, self-confident. As has been said many times, it was Pilate before Christ, not Christ before Pilate. They could not understand this per-

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fect absence of fear. Fear comes from hell, and it is the companion of this quest for power. The rush to-day for power, to get the upper hand in the nations, is simply born of fear. How different the Lord Jesus was and is! Fear is the result of the work of the enemy, of Satan.

Let me say to you in the very simplest way: In the simplest matters of life, if you ever fear about some movement, some step, you are going to take, if ever the element of fear comes in with a proposition—stop; do not move; wait. If Satan can, he will bring in an element of fear. You and I have got to move with God in quiet, steady restfulness. You keep your eye upon the fact of a fear. Whenever it comes, you say, 'This is not of God'. "God gave us not a spirit of fearfulness" (II Tim. i. 7). That comes from somewhere else.

### THE LORD WAS WITHOUT FEAR

Did Jesus signify? Does He signify? How does He signify? Because He is different. The question of power with Him had no fear associated with it. Oh, how He was urged to act in a precautionary, in a safeguarding way, in a self-preserving way—lest this or that should happen. The exigencies and the contingencies of the way He was taking were constantly brought before Him, and so the emergency element was constantly introduced, to get Him to act to safeguard either Himself or the mission on which He had come, the work committed to Him. But they never could get Him to act on that emergency basis at all. He was perfectly at rest, and in His case that represented tremendous power. Their ideas of power were other: 'You must do this, you must do that; you must build up here, you must safeguard there: your security will come along the line of your own doing something.' You see, it all hung upon the question of faith—for the greatest factor in power is faith. That is how it was with Jesus at the beginning. Will He trust God? The voice of the tempter said, 'If you are not quite sure of God, you must do something yourself or the day is lost, everything is lost'. So we see that, in this matter of our attitude in regard to power, we have to be 'born again', 'born from above'—to get an entirely different mentality, from another world, which brings in another nature, a disposition altogether different.

### THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

There is a paradox of power in the Word of God. On the one hand you can see how evil it can be

—not, however, that power in itself is evil—but how when man takes it into his own hands, to use it as an instrument of his selfhood, it becomes an evil thing, the very root of iniquity in the universe, because it puts God out of His place. That is one side.

And yet the Bible is just full of exhortations to be powerful, to be strong. It is the great word on which Christians rest for the accomplishment of the work of God in this dispensation. "Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you" (Acts i. 8). What is this power? You have to look again and again at the Lord Jesus. Do not think that power is invariably or pre-eminently demonstrated or manifested by miracles. There were miracles, there were manifestations, there were the phenomena of power, but they were for a purpose. You do not find either Christ or the apostles spending every minute, every hour, of their lives working miracles. There may be many recorded, but it was not the miracles that were the foundation of Christianity, and they are not the foundation of Christianity now. They are not the proofs positive and final that Christianity is Divine. Satan can simulate miracles, Satan can always work miracles, and it may sometimes be difficult to discriminate between the Divine and Satanic, for often they are psychical miracles. Antichrist will work miracles, and it will not be easy to detect that they are of Antichrist. Miracles do not represent the power, essentially and basically, of God. They are only one means of fulfilling His purpose at times, under given circumstances.

### THE POWER OF WHAT WE ARE

The real power of Christ, the real power of Christianity, the real power of the Church, is essentially spiritual: it is what Christ *was* and *is*, and what you and I *are*, not what we *do* at all. The power of God is not in our activities: that is, our activities are not just the proof of the power of God. If that were so, the Church would be a mighty force on earth to-day. It never was more active, more busy, more engaged in *doing*, than it is now. I venture to say that the spiritual power is far, far from commensurate with the Church's activities, and its mentality is so different. It has made bigness take the place of greatness. Loudness now seems to be regarded as force. No, power is a spiritual thing, and it is a matter of what we are. Our presence, without our words or actions, ought to be far more than both words and actions put together. After all, our words and our actions may only touch men as seen. What we are touches



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the world unseen. "I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God" (Mark i. 24). "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?" (Acts xix. 15). It is not that you have embraced Christianity; it is that you now belong to another realm, which realm is destined utterly to set aside this realm—which Kingdom of Heaven is destined to put aside this kingdom of Satan. It is not going to be official; it is not going to be done objectively. It is going to be done, and it is being done, spiritually. It is just in proportion to the measure of Christ represented in individuals, in companies, in the Church, that the kingdom of Satan is put out. And that means Christ's ideas, Christ's mentality, Christ's constitution.

## THE POWER OF LETTING GO TO GOD

It works out, as we tried to show earlier, in this way, that very often the most mighty thing that a believer can do is to let go to God. Everything is locked up while they are holding on, while they are not going to give anything away or let anybody have their work; while they are not going to relax or 'eat humble pie': while they are determined to stick to it on the ground that God has given it, and they hold it in their hands and will not let go. A terrific battle goes on, very often. But when at last that child of God lets go to God, relaxes the grip and says, 'Lord, I hand it back to You: it is Yours, not mine: it is for You to guard, it is for me to be the custodian of Your things: this is not my work, it is Yours, I am not going to hold on to it'—when that happens, something else happens. The lock-up gives way, there is a mighty release. God comes in, and He in freedom does something, something wonderful. He may give back, but He will give back with something very much more added in of spiritual power. It was not until Jacob, with all his effort and strain through the hours of the night, recognised that he was, after all, weaker than God, that he came to be Israel—a prince with God. The Lord Jesus was never holding on in fear of losing something. It was in the Father's hand. He trusted the Father, He let go to the Father. That is His way, that is His nature, that is His mentality—and that is power. Heaven comes in along that line, and it is then that the significance of a life arises. That is why He signified, and signifies.

Do you desire to signify something for God, to be, after all, of a right kind of significance, accountability, meaning? You see the need of getting Christ's holy constitution in us. The most powerful thing, we have often said, with God and as bringing God alongside, is meekness. Power is spiritual.

That is the point. You see the place of weakness in the New Testament. "When I am weak, then am I strong" (II Cor. xii. 10). "Most gladly . . . will I . . . glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (II Cor. xii. 9). There is a lot said about weakness. It is just the opposite of the devil; it is just the opposite of what the devil made man. It is God and God's made man. I am only hinting. There is far too much in this of detail to stay to speak of.

What is your idea of power? What is your mentality concerning power? Are you clamouring for power, wanting power? Well, it all works out this way. True power from God's standpoint is Calvary power. Christ crucified is the power of God. What is Calvary power? Well, it is emptiness of self, you and I being emptied of self—and truly, that is easier said than endured! Oh, how very much there is of this self about us still! How we hate—how we suffer—being emptied of ourselves! What a terrible thing it is to feel our inability—to know that we do not count in ourselves. Oh, to be *able*! And yet have we not proved, again and again, that our times of greatest emptiness and weakness have been the times when God has done most, and got glory by what He has done? Yes, it has been true. We have learned it along various lines and different ways, but God has been working right into the very inside of us, so that the thing is done—it becomes a part of us. He does not have to maintain it by external conditions. But He frequently uses such—very often physical—conditions, to bring us to that place of utter dependence upon Himself. It is really not good enough, is it, to be forced to it, compelled to it? That is God's way of education, but it would be very much better for us to be fit and well and as dependent upon God as ever.

"Power belongeth unto God." Power is a spiritual thing. The true nature of power is of a totally different order from our natural idea and conception of it. The Lord is so different. Power is not a temporal matter, it is not a physical matter, it is not an intellectual matter, it is not a social, a positional, or a possessional matter, at all. Power is essentially spiritual: I say again, it is what we are. Do believe that Satan is far more afraid of you being Christlike than he is of all your phraseology, and your epithets against him, and your hurling at him certain terms about the Blood. He laughs—he snaps his fingers at a lot of that. He says, 'I will catch you one of these days, and you will rue it!' But if you are spiritual, what can he do? "*The prince of this world cometh; and he hath nothing in me*" (John xiv. 30), said the Lord.

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So, in the hour of the power of darkness. He could say, "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (John xii. 31). I say again, that was not objectively and officially done. It was done by what He was. Satan had no ground, and so no power. This Man defeated every contemplation of Satan as he walked round Him. 'How can I get in?' I have been trying all these years to find some little gap: I cannot find it. I am beaten. I can do nothing with Him. He does not give me a chance. I offer Him prizes—He snaps His fingers at them: I threaten Him with the direst consequences of the course He is taking—it does not make any differ-

ence! I cannot get this Man.' That is how the prince of this world is cast out.

So it all resolves itself into the need, in the first place, for what is meant by being born from above: an entirely new nature and disposition, to begin with, and then a letting God do His work of conforming us to the image of His Son. I am not saying that works and words do not come in, but it is a heartbreaking business to be working and speaking with no power, no registration of heaven.

The Lord give us light as to what He means by this.

T. A-S.

## THE HISTORY OF CHRIST THE EXPERIENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN

### Part I

Reading: 1 Cor. i. 30; Rom. vi. 6, 8, 9, 11; Eph. ii. 5, 6; Col. ii. 9-12, 20; iii. 1, 3; Gal. ii. 20; v. 24; II Cor. v. 17, 18; John xv. 1-4; Heb. xi. 1.

IT is most important that we should see that we have got a history. All our history is the experience of Christ. We have to take His experience as our history. We are learning more and more that if we try to have a history of our own, we cannot get it, we always fail; but if we go into His history, into His experience, we have a history and we have an experience. The history of Christ is the experience of the Christian. The experience of Christ is the history of the Christian. We have nothing apart from Him. The Scriptures tell us that we were crucified with Him, quickened with Him, raised with Him, and set by God in the heavenlies with Him.

Now, that is very puzzling to the human mind, more puzzling even than the matter of the new birth, which we read about in John iii. The Lord told Nicodemus that he must be born again. Something needed to be effected in Nicodemus, a new birth, another birth, and the human mind is puzzled. It is something altogether out of its range—it cannot grasp the meaning of it, that one who has already been born should be born again. But here is something even more puzzling. It is not just something that is to be effected in us—it is something which *has already been effected, in association with someone else!* "I have been crucified with Christ." The "have been" is amazing enough, and the "with Christ" is also amazing. What does it mean that we have been crucified? 'Our old man has been crucified.' We *have been* quickened, we *have been* raised, we *have been* circumcised, old things *have passed away*, we *have sat* with Him

in the heavenlies. What does all this mean? Why is the past tense used?—in fact more, the aorist tense, the eternal tense? Why can God speak of us as those who have already got something?—have died, have been crucified, have been raised—all the 'haves'. What does it mean? That is what we want to see.

### NO 'INDIVIDUAL' EXPERIENCE AS APART FROM CHRIST'S

The Lord wants us to see that His meaning is not that we should acquire something personal in our experience. What God has done in the Divine purpose is to include us in Christ. In dealing with Christ, God has dealt with the Christian. In dealing with the Head, He has dealt with all the members. God is not willing to effect anything individual for you and me. The whole thing is that it is done in Christ. In the Scriptures, you find that no Christian experience exists *as such*. It is altogether wrong to think that we can experience anything, merely as Christians. All the spiritual experience of the Christian is already true in Christ. It has already been experienced by Christ. What we have is only an entering into His experience: we only enter into His history; we do not make one of our own. As soon as we start to make one of our own, we are simply puzzled, we cannot get anywhere. We find that we are 'in the air', we do not know where we are, and we cannot get the very thing we wanted to get. Now, we shall see things a little more clearly, I hope, as we go on.

The basic principle of God to lead us on—but to lead us on experimentally—is not to give us something; to bring us through something, and then to put something into us, so that we say 'I

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have got it, I have had an experience. I have seen something'. It is not that something has been effected that we can say, 'I died with Christ on March 3, or 'I was raised from the dead on January 1 in such and such a year', that the body of flesh was crucified, circumcised, on such and such a date: 'I had a definite experience of that: I asked for it and I got it'. No, that is not the way.

'Then', some will say, 'what about the crisis so many of us have passed through?' Some of us have passed through certain crises. For instance, George Müller could say, bowing himself down to the ground, 'There was a day when George Müller died'. How about that? The thing is this, that God does not give individuals individual experiences. All that they have is only an entering into what God has already done. The experience of Christ is our history: we do not have a separate history from His. That is the way that God has done it. He included us in Christ: we are incorporated into Him.

It is by the Spirit that we know that He is in us, and we are in Him through the Spirit. There you have Christ as the Head, and we come in as the Body: He as the Vine, we as the branches. God put us all into Christ—how, I do not know. We have only been told in that precious verse in I Cor. i. 30, "Of him are ye in Christ": that is all. How have we been included in Christ? We do not know: but one thing we do know, that it is "of him"—it is of God that we are in Him. God is the one who puts us into Christ. So whatever has happened to Christ has happened to us, because we are in Him. We are one with Him by the Spirit in such a way that whatever is true of Christ cannot but be true of us. Because we are in Him, we can say we were with Him. The 'in' is the ground for the 'with'. So we can say that our old man has been crucified with Him. Why? Because we have died *in* Him.

## OUR CRUCIFIXION, RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION WITH CHRIST IS PAST

So that is the marvellous point of the whole thing—the crucifixion. It begins there. We were not born with Christ, but we were crucified with Christ. Objectively, our union begins with His death. We were baptized into His death, as well as baptized into Him. Scripture never speaks of our dying separately, or that we are going to die. The fact is that we *have* died, and we have died *in Him*. Then we have been raised with Him, and we have been seated with Him. All we have is with Him.

The marvellous thing throughout the New Testa-

ment is this. We never find these things spoken of as something in the future, or something to be desired in the present. It is always presented to us as something already past. We cannot find one word telling us we should be crucified. It is always 'I have been crucified'. It is not that we should be raised: it is always that we have been raised. It is not that we should seek ascension, that we should seek to be seated in the heavenlies. It is always that we have already been seated with Him. It is something past. Why? Because all my experience is His history.

What does all this mean in our actual daily lives? The difficulty with us is this. We want a new experience, we want something more of God, we want to enter into the things which God has for us, and then we try to seek it, we pray for it, we struggle after it, we go after it. Oh, we may try to do a lot of things in order to manage it, and yet we cannot. Take the question of crucifixion. How many of us have been trying and stretching out in order to be crucified? Many have actually been practising crucifixion and yet they get nowhere. Why? Because their eyes have never been opened to see that God will never give them an individual experience. I emphasize that word 'individual', as meaning something apart from Christ. We cannot have an experience as an experience. We must see that all our experiences are related to Christ. They do not exist as mere experiences to be laid hold of. The whole thing was done in Christ, and every experience we are going to have is already there. If we do not find it there, we can never find it here, inside ourselves. The trouble with many of us is that we try to find an experience, we try to find something quite individual, something to be ours, we want it to be out of ourselves. We pray for something, we want that very thing to be effected in us. It seems as if we are looking up to God and asking Him to give us a new creation, to effect a creative act in us: whereas the whole thing has already been done, and it is done in Christ. Entry into Christ gives us that experience, and we do not get that experience as something separate from Christ.

How marvellous it is that we seek experiences without seeing something of Christ! People are said to be sanctified, are said to have victory, are said to have this or that, lots of spiritual experiences, simply because they have passed through a certain stage of seeking, and then they find themselves emotionally filled with joy, and they say, 'Oh, I have got something!' But the test is this. How about this experience with the Christ of God? Anything that is not from Him is an experience



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that is going to evaporate very soon. Every true spiritual experience means that we have found out a certain fact in Christ and we have entered into that. Every true experience is a discovery and a seeing of the facts of Christ. 'I have discovered that in Christ—then, praise the Lord, that is mine! I have got it, Lord, because it is in You.'

### EVERYTHING IS 'IN CHRIST'

It would be funny if one branch of the vine tried to bear a grape with a very dark skin, and another branch tried to bear a grape with a green skin, and another branch a grape with a purple skin, each branch trying to produce something of its own without reference to the vine. It is impossible, unthinkable. Certain Christians are seeking experiences as experiences. We think of crucifixion as something, we think of resurrection as something, we think of ascension as something. We never stop to think that the whole thing is related to a Person, and the Lord opens our eyes to that Person, therefore we have it. It is a great thing to know the facts of Christ. There can be no Christian experience if there is no discovery of the facts of Christ. All the others are 'pseudo' ones, not true ones.

Consider the question of crucifixion, the question of resurrection and the question of ascension. All these three experiences are absolutely necessary to our Christian lives. How do we get them? How do we get ourselves crucified? By denying ourselves certain things, by denying ourselves certain pleasures? No: many have tried that way, but they have not succeeded. How can we "walk in newness of life"? How can we live a resurrection life.

a life which is beyond death, a life which is life indeed?—so that everywhere we will find that life bubbling up, welling up; no death can ever touch that life, there is nothing stale, stagnant, about that life; there is something always positive going on. How can we get that? Do we seek it as an experience, or how do we get it? How do we see our position in the heavenlies, far above authorities and powers and principalities? How do we get into that position of victory, where Satan is under us?

It is not that we are going to get into victory, but we have already won. The whole thing is in Him. God has done something with me in Christ. I cannot understand it, but I know it. I cannot explain it, but I believe it. None of us can give a reason or explanation, but it is a Divine eternal fact. God has already done that. "I have been crucified." We see our position in Christ; our oneness with Him is perfect. God has made it. It is not that we unite ourselves with Him. No. Have you ever read in the Scriptures that you should get into Christ? I think that that would be the hardest job to do—to get into Christ. We cannot get into Him. "Of him are ye in Christ." Of God are we in Christ. It is something done by God. God put us into Christ. So, when the Lord Jesus died on the Cross, we were there. The Lord Jesus came up from the grave, and I will not kneel down and pray, 'Lord, give me that resurrection life'. I will not seek to be raised. I will simply look up to Him and say, 'Lord, I praise Thee I was there! When Thou wast raised, I was raised. Your experience is my history. I do not know how, but God did it.' His experience is my history.

W. N.

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### THE BLOOD OF SPRINKLING

*Reading: Hebrews xii. 24; Exodus xxiv. 4-8; Hebrews ix. 11-14, 18-20.*

I would like to share with you some thoughts about the Blood of Sprinkling. I am freshly awakened, in reading Hebrews ix. 14, by the fact that it is the blood of *sprinkling* that is in view, as distinct from the blood poured out as a sacrifice and then taken through into the presence of God.

When we speak about being saved through the Blood of Jesus, our thought, I think, is almost invariably a limited one. We think of His Blood shed upon the Cross as an offering for sin, and then that Blood taken through into the presence of God and offered there on our behalf, and we say, Well, thank

God He has made atonement for us: we are accepted because of the Blood! But that is not the blood of sprinkling; at any rate, it is not the full thought of the blood of sprinkling. We have it in the old covenant, as we read in Exodus xxiv. After God from His side had stated the terms of the covenant and Moses had rehearsed the words of the Lord to the people, the people's answer was: "All that the Lord hath spoken will we do, and be obedient". Sacrifices were then made, and Moses took the blood and sprinkled it upon the people, as if to say, 'This blood puts the covenant on you—all the terms of the covenant are upon you—and you—and you—and you!' The blood—that is, typically, of course—took all that the coven-

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ant signified, all its terms and values, and put it upon each one upon whom the blood was sprinkled. We know, in this case, that, hardly before the words were out of their mouth, the people had broken that first covenant: so that it is quite obvious that the blood sprinkled upon them had no power to cause them to keep the covenant. It was powerless blood, but it was none the less in type the blood of sprinkling.

You come to the sixteenth chapter of Leviticus, where the great service of the Day of Atonement is set forth and the whole system of offerings has been set up by the Lord to deal with the fact that the covenant had been broken: and there you find the High Priest going in, taking the blood of the sin offering and sprinkling it upon the Mercy Seat—but there is no mention of sprinkling it upon the people. The blood is taken in and sprinkled toward God, and in type the Lord says, 'Well, because of this blood, I put away the sin for another year: the sin question is remitted': but still the people remained without. There is no blood on them, no blood of sprinkling on them now. This sacrifice for sin, to deal with the sin question, is only sprinkled God-ward: there is nothing sprinkled upon them.

You go on a little further, to another incident in the Mosaic economy. Aaron and his sons, the priestly family, are, at a point, touched with blood: their ear, their thumb and their toe are touched with blood, and then the oil is sprinkled on. Here is a company, even in this dispensation of sin and sacrifice—here at any rate is a company upon whom the blood is placed: as if to say that, while the whole mass of Israel are outside the sprinkling of the blood, there is a company upon whom the blood is poured, and then oil to follow blood, suggestive of Holy Spirit enablement where the blood has come. But that is only a company.

We come over to the new covenant, and we read, "Ye are come . . . to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling". You are come to the Blood of sprinkling.

Now we go into Hebrews ix again, and we read about the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of a heifer. That of course relates to Numbers xix—the heifer that was burnt and its ashes mixed with water to make water of separation, to be sprinkled upon those that had become defiled, typically making them clean and fit for the congregation of the Lord's people again. The point is that in certain circumstances the blood of bulls and goats was put upon, sprinkled upon, men in that old covenant: but "how much more"—if that availed in a typical way for a certain ceremonial cleansing—"how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through

the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works . . .?" That is the phrase I want to stay with. Whatever the old covenant sprinkling had in it typically, it had no *power* in it to make any difference to the individual. There may have been in certain cases in the sight of God certain things imputed, but it had no power to impart the values in a living way. Simply an imputation from God—that is all that the blood of sprinkling brought to them. "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience . . .?"

What does the Blood of Christ represent? It represents His life, and that is without blemish; therefore the Blood of Christ represents a perfect, spotless, unblemished life, acceptable to God. And then, being blood, it represents that life poured out sacrificially, death in the form of a sacrifice, an offering: so that the Blood of Christ represents an unblemished, holy, perfect life offered sacrificially through the Eternal Spirit.

So you have here three factors in the Blood. You have its perfection in utter holiness: wherefore it is incorruptible, undying, unceasing in its energies and in its values, because it is not possible for it to corrupt, being holy. With that, you have the spirit of sacrifice: and you have the Eternal Spirit, which means the unceasing energies of God. All that is in the Blood. Now that is the Blood of the covenant.

Now we have come to the Blood of sprinkling, sprinkling on you and on me and on everyone who comes to it in faith. What does it mean? Is this now like the blood of the bull or of the goat, that was typically put on a man in the old covenant? What effect did that have? None, as regards imparting anything to the man. But now here is Blood sprinkled upon you which has in it the eternal energies of the Holy Ghost, the perfection of holiness, an incorrupt and incorruptible living energy with the power of holiness in it, and including in itself also the uttermost spirit of selfless sacrificial devotion to the will of God. All that is sprinkled on us. Is that going to have any effect in the life?

Take a very imperfect illustration—I hope it is not a misleading one. Think for a moment of the difference between a drop of water and a drop of the most virulent acid that is known. You put a drop of water on something—what will it do? In all probability it will do nothing. That is like the blood of sprinkling of the bulls and goats—it could do nothing. Now take a drop of the most

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virulent acid you know and put that on something. What will it do? It will burn and eat its way and bring its energies to bear upon the thing on which it has fallen, until, in course of time, and being only a drop, it uses itself up and comes to an end. But if you could put into that drop eternal energies that did not get used up and come to an end, and if you could then have it sprinkled, it would work and work and work and exert its own energies wherever it was sprinkled. You would get a mighty energy ever working there and never ceasing. If that at all illustrates the difference between the blood of sprinkling in the old covenant and under the new, it means that, under the old covenant, the sprinkled blood of bulls had no power, any more than a drop of water, to produce any effect where it was applied: but the Blood of sprinkling under the new covenant, where the Blood is the Blood of Christ, has a power, like the mighty working power of the acid, that works with the energies of an unceasing, holy, sacrificial life, with all the might of the Eternal Spirit in it; and that power is working in and upon the one upon whom it is sprinkled.

You see the difference between the old covenant and the new. Under the old covenant, sins were pardoned, sins were forgiven, iniquities were covered—but what about the people? Oh, they were left powerless still! But, under the new covenant, not only is it said “their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more”, but now the Blood is sprinkled upon us in order to impart those mighty energies that they may work in each one of us. We are no longer left feeble people; all the content of His precious Blood is sprinkled upon us in its living energies. Here is the secret of a walk according to the will of God under the new covenant—

“I will put my laws on their heart.

And upon their mind also will I write them”  
(Hebrews x. 16).

Here is the Blood of sprinkling. His law is in our heart and mind. What does it mean? It means that the Blood of sprinkling brings right into us, in a living energetic manner, the knowledge and the power of the will of God. It is an energy. This Blood of sprinkling has in it the infinite energies of Calvary's victory and of the Eternal Spirit.

I see something in the Blood of sprinkling that holds a key. I am trusting that it holds a key for my personal spiritual problems, as I cry to God for a new endowment of power. All the power is in the Blood of sprinkling. The Blood of sprinkling has in it the dynamic energies of the will of God. Through the Eternal Spirit that Blood was

shed. That Blood has the secret of the power of holiness in it: here is the secret of victory over sin. That Blood conquered Satan: here is the power of victory over Satan. And that Blood was the embodiment of the utmost spirit of selfless, sacrificial abandon to the will of God.

I am sure we need to get our thought about this right. Do not only think of the Blood as the Blood there in heaven that the Lord took through as High Priest. That is true, but here is the whole point of the Melchizedek ministry as over against the Aaronic. Aaron went in on the Day of Atonement with blood God-ward and came out with nothing except the assurance that God had accepted it. The ministry of our Melchizedek is also God-ward; but then, being King on the Throne as well as Priest. He comes forth from the Throne with the same power of the Blood and says, ‘All that is true God-ward is true toward you’: so that what the Blood effected in heaven with God, it effects also in us—the very same thing. That mighty potent Blood is sprinkled upon us and we have Christ in us. How is Christ in us? The Blood of sprinkling is upon us: therefore Christ is in us. We have the Blood and we have the Lord.

Let us ask the Lord to show us what it means that we have come to the Blood of sprinkling. Make that an advance upon our common thought of the precious Blood. I am quite sure it holds a key that is going to be of great help to many of us—that the Blood is not only in heaven but on our heart and conscience. “How much more shall the blood of Christ . . . cleanse your conscience . . .?” It does not touch my conscience to know that the Blood is up there; but if all the potency of all that infinite holiness of life that is in Christ is sprinkled on me, so that the power of perfect holiness is upon me, what ground now is there for my conscience to accuse me? None at all. The Blood contains the infinite power of an incorrupt and incorruptible holy life with all the energies of the Holy Spirit inherent. If we could get it by revelation to our hearts that the Blood of sprinkling is upon us, that we have come to the Blood of sprinkling, I believe some of us would jump out of our shoes that we have at last found the key we have been seeking. That is the direction of my prayer: ‘Lord, show me the meaning of the Blood of sprinkling, all that it contains’. Will you pray that?

I feel that, if we will set ourselves to pray to know the meaning and power of the Blood of sprinkling, we may come to the place that some of us long to reach, and have not attained.

G. P.



## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

## FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

## TIME TO WAKE UP

ON a table by the side of my bed there stands a neat little chromium clock. It looks innocent enough, as it ticks away happily all through the night, leaving me to sleep peacefully and undisturbed.

There are times, however, when it is far from quiet, and anything but peaceful. I wake with a start, nearly deafened with the furious ringing of a bell. Is it an Ambulance? No, it sounds worse than that. Is it perhaps a Fire Engine? The bell still clangs. Yes, I begin to think to myself, it must be a Fire Engine! But as my senses return, I realise that it is nothing of the kind. It is just my quiet little clock, suddenly become alive with excitement, and ringing away for dear life in its efforts to rouse me from my sleep.

An alarm-clock is a faithful friend. When the moment comes for waking up, it has no mercy, and will not take any excuse. 'Wake up! Wake up!' it cries. 'No more time for sleep! All your plans for the day will be ruined if you don't listen to me and jump out of bed quick!' Sometimes I feel cross with my little clock, wishing that it would be satisfied just to continue its cosy ticking, and let me sleep on. But when I am properly awake and busy in all the interests of the new day, I feel so grateful to it for not allowing me to waste my time in sleep or be lost in empty dreams.

Inside each one of us the Lord has placed an alarm-clock. It is called our conscience. When it gives a sudden call it can be very disturbing. It makes us feel most uncomfortable, for it stirs us from our selfish dreams, and surprises us in our sinful desires. Just when we thought that nobody was looking, just when all seemed quiet and still, the alarm sounds in our hearts, calling us to rouse ourselves. 'Come out of the darkness', it seems to say, 'and come into the light of the Lord'.

After all, it was very silly of me to be cross with my bed-side clock, for it was I myself who arranged for it to ring. I turned the key to wind the alarm spring, and I set the special hand which marks the time for it to go off. It was my own choice that it should rouse me: I wanted it to save me from myself. And I am quite sure that you want your conscience to tell you when sin is near, so that you can turn away from it to trust and obey the Saviour. Every time you pray, you are really setting your alarm-clock: you are asking that you may not be too late, but that you may be roused in good time to please the Lord, and not to be

caught in the darkness of doing wrong.

But supposing you do not listen to your conscience! Supposing you hush it up! This is very easy to do, just as it is easy to silence my clock. There is a little round, red knob on the top of the clock, and if I like, I can simply reach out a lazy hand and make the bell stop ringing. Just one little touch on the red knob: then all is quiet, and I am free to sleep on again for as long as I wish. Years ago alarm-clocks were not so easy to silence. You had to sit up in bed, take hold of the clock with one hand and then, with the other, move round a lever which checked the ringing of the bell. By that time you were usually awake in any case, and not wanting to sleep any more. But now it is so different. One little touch, and all is quiet. You can turn over and go to sleep again. When you do wake up, the hour will have passed and the day be spoiled. What a pity that you did not heed the alarm.

Peter, the disciple, once had a sad experience like that. Of course in Bible times they didn't have alarm-clocks, but they had something just as good, for like the people in country districts to-day, they were woken up by the crowing of the cock. When it was nearly time for the Lord Jesus to be crucified, Peter was very anxious to be true to Him, and not to deny Him. The Lord Jesus knew how hard it would be, so He told Peter that there would be an alarm to warn him, and that it would sound in time to make him wake up to the danger and seek help from God before it was too late. He told Peter that the cock would crow three times.

Sure enough, the temptation came, and it caught Peter off his guard. He denied his Lord. "And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew" (Mark 14. 68). But alas, Peter was like one of those foolish people who put out their hand to press the knob and stop the bell ringing. He took no notice of the warning. When at last the cock crowed the third time, it was too late. He hadn't listened to the alarm. Now he could only cry bitter tears of sorrow and regret.

So, boys and girls, when conscience tells you to wake up, to realise your danger, and to turn to the Lord Jesus, don't be cross about it. And don't harden your heart. It is easy enough to do that, but you will be so very sorry later on, if you do. How much better to wake up to the Saviour's love, to rise up and follow Him. "Now it is high time for you to awake out of sleep . . . But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 13. 11, 14). H. F.

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## GOLDEN SNUFFERS

*Reading: Exodus xxxvii. 17 - 24.*

*"And he made the lamps thereof, seven, and the snuffers thereof, and the snuff-dishes thereof, of pure gold."*

WE have here the great vessel of light and testimony in the candlestick, which quite clearly is Christ in corporate expression, but Christ pre-eminently; and we have the oil for the light, which is the Holy Spirit: the two Members of the Godhead in co-operation for bringing the light of God into this world amongst men. But when we have said all that we can say about Christ Himself and about the Holy Spirit, there is something else necessary to God for the carrying out of the Divine intention in the coming of Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit, and that something else is represented by the wicks of the lamp. These wicks are never prescribed; nothing is said about them, no provision is made. We do not read anywhere that the Lord said, 'Make wicks: this is how the wicks should be made'. There is nothing like that at all. They are simply there by indication. The fact that there are snuffers indicates that there must have been wicks, or it can be taken for granted that the oil would not burn by itself without a medium, and although there is so little notice of the wicks themselves, they are indispensable to the Lord Himself, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for Their purpose in this world.

And the wicks, of course, are the children of God—'Frail children of dust, and feeble as frail'. The Lord needs wicks, and cannot fulfil His purpose without them. You and I are in the capacity of the wicks of the great Lamp of testimony, the Lord Jesus; the great power of testimony, the Holy Spirit. There are one or two very simple thoughts then in connection with wicks that I will pass on to you.

## THE LORD'S DESIRE FOR FRESHNESS

The first is that the provision of snuffers for the wicks implies and carries with it the Divine desire and thought to keep things fresh in the matter of His testimony. These lamps, these wicks, were to be trimmed regularly morning and evening; and, although it may seem strange, yet the fact remains, and we know it all too well, that the human element does creep in even where there is the presence of the Holy Spirit. It might be thought that if you are in living touch with Christ and if the

Holy Spirit, like the oil, is really flowing through you, the human element would be eliminated and there would be nothing of that which speaks of staleness coming in at all. There would be no need for snuffers, surely. But the fact remains that the snuffers are still necessary. The human element does persist and the Lord has taken account of it.

And the Lord has constantly to take steps with us in order to keep things fresh, to keep things alive. We are the element that would arrest the full fresh blaze of the testimony. We often cause an obscuring of the light. It is not due to the Lord; it is not due to the Holy Spirit. It is this human element coming in all the time. It comes in in many ways, and the fact that the Lord has said that morning and evening continually the snuffers must come into operation, the wick must be trimmed, indicates that even as to our experience of Himself, even as to our union with the Lord, even as to the Holy Spirit flowing through us, it must not be something of yesterday or of last week or of ten years ago, twenty, thirty, forty years ago. It must be something fresh to-day. It is so easy to live in a past experience and to be always talking about something that the Lord did long ago. The Lord's thought is that there must be a freshness and livingness for to-day. Our life in the Lord, our experience of the Lord, our testimony to the Lord, has got to be renewed day by day. So, as a safeguard against living upon something of the past, snuffers need to be brought into operation. The Lord says, 'No; living in a past spiritual experience can be like charred wick. It was quite true—yes, it was the Holy Spirit—but it belongs to the past'. We have to bring things up to date; things have to be kept alive and fresh to-day. So we get rid of mere past history, "forgetting the things which are behind". Even though they were of the Lord, things must be renewed.

There is another way, of course, in which the human element can come in. It is in connection with those words of Paul—"Though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day" (11 Cor. iv. 16). Now, if we live on the outward man, we shall be like a charred wick and it will be a smoky testimony, the light will be dim. There is to be a renewing day by day of the inward man. Well, we know the day by day principle of the Lord for daily bread from above, for inward renewal from above. We have got to get rid of everything that, although once good, has now become something of the past and lost its

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freshness. The snuffers speak of the Lord's thought for keeping everything up to date, up to the hour ; and if that is the Lord's thought, then it surely must be possible, surely it is His intention that we shall never exhaust things, never exhaust the freshness of our life with Him ; that there shall always be something more—and there is.

But something has to be done in order to preserve that freshness, and that is by constant trimming—the work of the snuffers. The Lord has many ways of trimming, and I expect some of us know quite well that the Lord does do this—how He causes the greatest and best things of the past to seem as though they never had been, to lose their strength and their grip upon us. Great experiences they were in our history, but unless the Lord does a new thing now, they are as nothing. They were tremendous things in our spiritual history, and we thought that nothing could ever be greater—yet now they are as nothing, because we have been brought to a position where the Lord must exceed all that has been. The snuffers are at work. They are cutting off the past, cutting off that which is not right up to date, and seeking to trim us for something fresh to-day.

In many other matters which we could mention, the Lord operates in this way. But whether we enumerate the ways in which the Lord uses the snuffers or not, let us look at the fact that the Lord prunes or trims, cuts off, deals with, the human element : makes necessary by various ways and means the freshness of His life, the new experience, a new leaping up of life. *We* come into the way and the Lord has to deal with us in the way : this human element, this charred wick, has to be got out of the way—and how prone we are to be charred, how easy it is for us to be charred. We all know that. We are every day troubled with this tendency of ours to be like a charred wick. We get so stale and so earthy. The Lord is always out for the maintenance of life up to date in freshness, and in order to do that, He has to do a lot of trimming.

I think Paul in Asia fits into that so well. He had known many resurrections. He could say, "God . . . who delivered", and he knew many deliverances. He had at length to say: "We despaired . . . of life . . . we . . . had the sentence of death within ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead" (II Cor. i. 8. 9). A new resurrection was necessary, something beyond anything that had ever been ; and the Lord trimmed him for that. So He would trim us continually for new experiences of His life, fresh manifestations of Himself, right up to date.

## PRIESTLY MINISTRY

Then another thing is that trimming is priestly ministry. It was given to the priests to do this and no one else dared to do it. It is priestly ministry to trim. Of course, we have spoken almost entirely of the Lord doing this trimming, and it must be the Lord who does it in the first place ; but the Lord has priests. There are priests with the High Priest, and to them is given this secret ministry of working together with Him in using the golden snuffers. Galatians vi. 1 is just the using of the golden snuffers. "Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness ; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted." "Ye who are spiritual": that surely answers to priesthood, surely that is what priesthood is amongst believers. Priesthood and priestly ministry are bound up with spiritual men and women. I will not go back to show from the Old Testament how priesthood was based upon spirituality, or to point out all that is there represented of spirituality in the matter of priesthood. I think we can take it for granted that spiritual men and women are His priests, and priestliness now is a matter of spirituality. "If a man be overtaken in a fault"—there is the wick charred and the testimony a bit blurred and dim and smoky : then the golden snuffers come into play, and "ye which are spiritual" are to use them, to restore such a one. It is priestly ministry in restoring.

## SNUFFERS OF PURE GOLD

But remember that these snuffers are of pure gold. That is the Divine nature by which this ministry is to function. "Restore such a one in a spirit of meekness" or "gentleness". Is that not Divine nature? They are *golden* snuffers, pure gold. "A spirit of meekness"—that is Christ. "Considering thyself lest thou also be tempted"—that is humility, meekness. Oh, it is so easy to use the snuffers in such a way that you snuff people out, snuff out their life. It is said of Him, "A bruised reed will he not break, and a dimly burning wick will he not quench" (Isa. xlii. 3). No, the Lord's idea, even with a smoky wick, is not to quench the testimony, by coming down upon the poor vessel : but the true spirit of priesthood will seek to deal with that which is wrong, the fault, the trespass, the evil, with the positive object of reviving, refreshing, restoring.

It is so easy to discuss and criticize and speak of the fault and wrong—and do nothing. 'Look



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at So-and-so. Their testimony is not very bright. Look at this and that and the other thing about them.' Yes, the dimly smoking wick to be talked about, the faults indicated and pointed out and taken note of. That is not good enough for priestliness. The priestly ministry of spiritual men and women is, while recognising the need, to help to meet the need in a true spirit of service, to get rid of the difficulty.

Well, that is all very simple, but it has a deep meaning. We are wicks: we may have the Holy Spirit, we may be joined to Christ, we may be bound up with the great testimony of God, to be for Him vessels of light on this earth: but with all that, given union with Christ, given Divine purpose, given the Holy Spirit, something is needed in us continually. We have to be kept in a condition day by day which makes it possible for the Lord to be seen, and the Lord is just continually renewing His testimony in us by keeping away things that seek to come in—sin and self and the world

and other things that char the wick. The Lord wants His testimony kept fresh and living continually, right up to date, and then He wants us to help Him in this—but in a spirit of meekness. Oh, it is no use our trying to take the mote out of our brother's eye if we have a beam in our own.

The Lord give us much grace and much wisdom in fulfilling this ministry. It is an important one, to help the Lord's people to maintain freshness and fulness. And if the Lord uses the snuffers, let us remember that He is seeking not to lessen but to increase, not to quench but to make greater His light through us. It may be cutting off, it may seem to be sometimes reduction, but the Lord intends enlargement and purification by His using of these instruments, which seem often to be destructive but are intended by Him to be just the opposite. So much, then, for the golden snuffers. The Lord make us those who can be used as snuffers: not to limit, crush, quench, but to help, restore, revive, increase.

T. A-S.

### “ BE YE ENLARGED ”

*Reading: 11 Cor. vi. 11-13, x. 3-5; Eph. iii. 17-19.*

*“Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own affections . . . be ye enlarged.”*

THE Apostle is writing to the Corinthians with a very full heart, and at this point he is touching the fact of straitness or spiritual limitation among the people, and behind all that is burdening the Apostle is that one deep concern of the Spirit for the enlargement, the greater fulness spiritually of the children of God, and surely this finds a response in our hearts. We are conscious of the smallness of our measure, how cramped we are, how limited is the flow of Divine life and love through all our lives. We are people whose life, instead of being a flow, is so often a feeble trickle, and, apart from any overflow or outflow to meet the thirsty land round us, how often our own consciousness is of unsatisfied need. We have very little ourselves. I am putting this as a general condition among the saints, a sense of—‘Well, why am I so shut in? Why is there not a breathing freely in the air of heaven as a normal experience? Why is our spiritual measure so very very limited, our knowledge of the Lord so limited, our delight in Him so flickering?’

And we all have the battle with the excuses for our smallness. One excuse is that we are limited

because of our sinfulness. Well, I cannot get past the fact that I am sinful and I am a failure, and therefore there is a constant struggle which is never really at an end. There is a measure of defeat in life all the way along; there is a sense of being under things instead of above things, and that so it must always be! Is that the sort of attitude that we so easily take on? That is me and my measure; others may go on and be full, but with me, I must accept limitation, I am little spiritually and probably always will be! And the Apostle is meeting that kind of attitude. He is saying, ‘You are straitened in yourselves, it is you yourselves who are the cause of the limitation; be enlarged!’

Or is it an excuse concerning other people? Is the excuse that by reason of the circumstances or associations into which I have come, my life is cramped? Somehow my life cannot expand because this or the other thing or circumstances are constantly quenching my spontaneous life which would so love to come out into fulness and greatness and liberty; but no, I am always conscious of being damped! Well, our circumstances are the Lord's will: He has put us here: but there is no liberty, there is no enlargement! Listen to the Apostle's answer: “O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straitened in us”—‘ye are straitened in your own measure of affection: it is your own heart

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that has become cramped. You are blaming someone else, but it is yourselves, you are cramped and limited in yourselves. You can be enlarged, you can be expanded and be according to the measure that the Lord desires! "That ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God"—that is His measure.

Well, now, that is just in outline the kind of concern with which the Apostle is occupied, that there is not the glory of the Lord manifestly among His people—there is something that is holding in limitation the Divine life in the Church, and each individual may be saying, 'Well, for certain reasons I cannot help it. I am limited: this is the matter and that is the matter!'—and the Apostle is setting all that aside. He says, 'You are limited in your own affections—there is something in yourself that is the cause of the trouble—it is your own fault!'

That does not sound kind, but I believe the Lord is saying to me, and will probably say to us all, 'It is your own fault!' There is no excuse: the Lord's heart is enlarged, the Lord's heart is large toward us with fulness, with abundance. He is not withholding; He is pouring forth to fill up every lack of ours. He is waiting for us to avail ourselves of that which He is pouring out to us all the time.

## HINDRANCES TO ENLARGEMENT

### (a) CONSCIENCE OF SIN

Very briefly, we may touch on just three things which are our own fault, for which we are to blame, that prevent the enlargement for which we all long and for which the Lord is longing. The very first cause of limitation is conscience of sin. We read in Hebrews x. 2: "The worshippers, having been once cleansed, would have had no more consciousness of sins". The first cause of all other limitation is conscience of sins—a clouded conscience, a lack of positive assurance as to righteousness, some ground left for the Accuser. Paul says: "I . . . exercise myself"—I work hard at it—"to have a conscience void of offence toward God and men always" (Acts xxiv. 16). 'I am constantly at this thing, because on this everything else will hinge. Not a cloud between me and the Lord must ever be allowed to remain'. If Satan once besmirches your conscience, your development and increase and enlargement is closed down. Once the sin question becomes unsettled, heaven ceases to be open. The windows of heaven are closed, and we are all shut in on ourselves; we become suspicious of one another, because heaven is not open. Once the conscience is clear, the light of heaven floods in.

How many problems have we when we are in the joy of the Lord? We cannot think of them. The moment the joy of the Lord goes, they all come up again. Satan is out to break that joy in the Lord, until we are surrounded by problems, and by despair under the weight of them. The Christian life of a saint can be a positive burden because this matter of conscience is never settled. Satan is always saying, 'You ought to have done this! What does that other one think of you? Where is your joy?' We have got to learn to meet it, meet it with the provision the Lord has given us. We have it in the 22nd verse of Hebrews x: "Let us draw near . . . having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience"; and the responsibility for that rests with us. The Blood has been sprinkled—that is God's side; but we have to appropriate that for our own conscience. We have to come with whatever the cloud is, whatever the accusation is, whatever the thing is that is causing heaviness, and say, 'Lord, I bring that to the sprinkled Blood and I take its efficacy for my conscience—an absolute cleansing of the whole sense of guilt or failure or sin, or the accusation that comes to me from the sense of others' opinions'.

Oh, how the enemy raises up thoughts in our hearts as to what somebody else thinks! Usually they do not think that, but even if they do it does not really matter. The Blood is the only way through, and if the Blood is applied and we appropriate its perfect cleansing, other matters that need to be settled will come into true position. If there are things that need to be put right with other people, it is when we have a clear conscience toward God, it is when we have put things right with the Lord by the precious Blood, not while we are under condemnation, that the true adjustment will come. You will not get right with the Lord by trying to put everything right. You can spend your time chasing round to have a talk with So-and-so, to put things right—and usually it puts things wrong! There is nothing that will put it right but the Blood, I am certain of that. When you are rejoicing in the Lord and have no interest as to whether others are pleased or displeased, the Lord in your own heart will say, 'There is a matter that needs adjustment!' Then we shall want to go and get that matter put right, and in the joy of the Lord we will be able to see clearly where we are and what needs to be dealt with.

Let us begin with the Blood: let us have a conscience void of offence because of the sprinkled Blood—His righteousness, not ours. Do you see the subtle way we want to prove our righteousness? If we can prove we are right or get right

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with somebody, we will be all right. No, you will please God by faith in the Blood, and when you are happy in His forgiveness and righteousness, you will soon find that you must deal with practical matters, with a heart at rest. And so, if we want enlargement, we need to be very definite in our dealing with this matter of conscience—and of course it is a big matter. We read that, when Satan is finally cast out, when the heavens are cleansed of him and all his hosts, "They overcame him" (the Accuser) "because of the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. xii. 11). *The Lamb*. Victory is centred in this simple little matter of the conscience, and as the battle grows more intense because His coming is near, we shall need more and more to know this weapon against the Accuser. Never 'take on' anything, but have dealings with Him about it and bring it to the Blood. It is vital. If only we could get this right into us, and be a people, because of precious Blood, always nigh unto God!

## (b) OUR OWN MIND

Then, very briefly, there are two other things that limit us. One is the matter touched in Corinthians x. You notice that the Apostle says, 'You judge of me as though I walked according to the flesh: you have an opinion about me, and the result is you are limited and cramped. It is you who have lost the joy of the Lord, not I. I have not lost it, I am quite happy; but you think something about me. Now, look here—our warfare is not after the flesh, but mighty through God to the casting down of strongholds!' Have you ever noticed the stronghold that Satan can have in your whole life because of your mind about somebody or something? Do you know that there are those who have lost years because of an idea about something? They have taken on an opinion or mind about certain people, and it has put them out of action perhaps for twenty or thirty years. Does not Satan laugh at that? Why? Because they have taken on reasoning, human reasoning or imagination.

There is only one way of emancipation: there is only one way to the overthrowing of that stronghold which is paralysing your life—and it may not even be an imagination about others, it may be an imaginary doctrine you have developed. You have ideas about the Word of God, about the truth: about what ought to be, because things do not come up to what ought to be: but it does not affect the things—it only paralyses your own life. You form a mind and close in on it—and Satan has closed it. It is a stronghold of the devil in your life, and that thing exalts itself against the knowledge of

God. If you or I develop a mentality, our pet theory, anything—there is immediately a stronghold.

You will meet some people who are living by principle, and sometimes you touch life, but usually you touch death. The principle is not Christ; Divine principle operates by the Holy Ghost as you walk in the Spirit. It is not an idea that you fit everyone into—that is death. Once we are tied on to something, it is a stronghold, and you think it is your stronghold; but you will find it is Satan's, and he can get that into the heart of anything, he can get that into the most mature, once the mind closes down and says, 'We have an opinion!' Paul was flexible up to his last day, because he cast down every reasoning; every 'logical' conclusion, he was not going to be bound by them. His attitude was, 'I think that is so, but maybe I am wrong!' The way through is casting down these things. Do we want to be enlarged in the Lord? We shall have to come to Him with every idea ceasing to exalt itself or to have a place in our thoughts, and say, 'Lord, I cast this thing down, my own mind about things; I cast it down! I bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ!' Where is Christ? Why, this whole epistle is full of it—"Christ in you". It is the indwelling Lord who must have every thought in captivity.

## (c) LACK OF POSITIVE LOVE

Then the last point—we can but touch it. "That ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all the saints . . . the love of Christ." Whatsoever is not love does not hurt the other one nearly so much as it hurts us. However much we may feel we have a right ground, however much others may have injured us, if our reaction is something that is not the love of the Lord going out, our own spiritual life ceases growing at that point, our own life ceases to increase; and so the Apostle says to the Corinthians that his heart is enlarged toward them, he loves them, his heart is going out to them all the time. We not only need to have no difficulty or difference between us and another child of God—that should certainly be settled—but I believe the Lord wants something more than that. I believe He wants us to be positive in our love. Some of us are very convicted about that—not just putting up with one another, but going out to one another. "Love one another from the heart fervently" (I Pet. i. 22): that is a very acid test. We are quite willing not to have a really bad difference with somebody, but we can



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just keep quietly out of their way, and it is not that we do not love them—but that is all very cool. It is not like the Lord's love. I know we cannot work these things up, but I do believe the Lord would enlarge our hearts if we were willing. I believe He is saying to us, 'I am full of love, full of light, full of all that you lack : now, be enlarged, open your heart wide, and be what I am, by faith and by My grace!'

Come to the precious Blood and claim your inheritance of a conscience void of offence, and if there be thoughts and ideas that are holding you in captivity, be done with them and let the mind of Christ have you captive. Love one another largely, liberally, that we may all be enlarged. How true it is—"Give, and it shall be given unto you" (Luke vi. 38). May something of that be true of us.

C. J. B. H.

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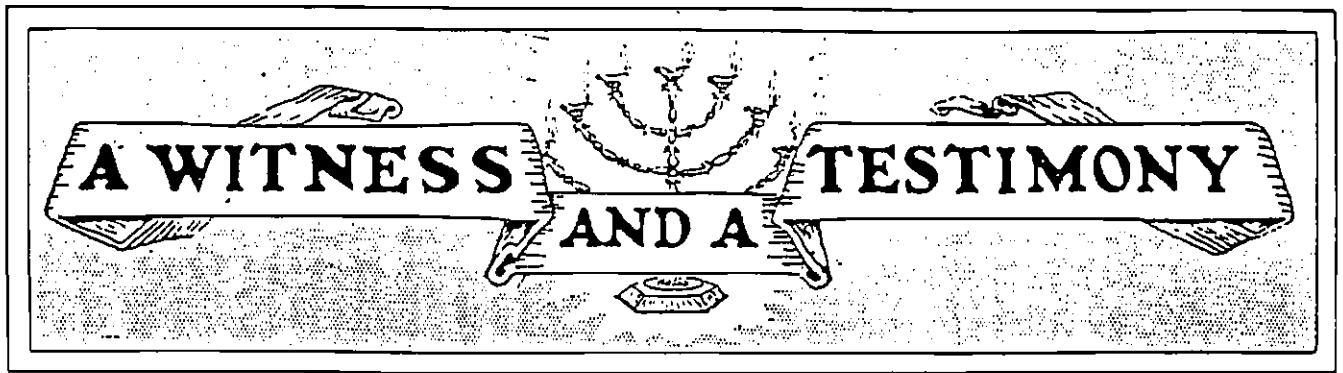
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## THE NEXT SPECIAL GATHERINGS

at HONOR OAK

will be held, the Lord willing, on  
SATURDAY, May 23, at 3. 30 & 6. 30 p.m.  
LORD'S DAY, May 24, at 11 a.m., 3. 30 & 6. 30 p.m.  
MONDAY, May 25, at 11 a.m., 3. 30 & 6. 30 p.m.

*All enquiries regarding accommodation, etc, should be addressed to: The Conference Secretary, at 13, Honor Oak Road, London, S.E. 23.*



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## UNION WITH CHRIST

(Concluded)

## VII. CONSUMMATED UNION

"And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, that he took with him Peter and John and James, and went up into the mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became white and dazzling. And behold, there talked with him two men, who were Moses and Elijah; who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: but when they were fully awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. And it came to pass, as they were parting from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah: not knowing what he said. And while he said these things, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my Son, my chosen: hear ye him. And when the voice came, Jesus was found alone" (Luke ix. 28 - 36).

"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him. . . . For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God" (Romans viii. 17, 19 - 21).

". . . when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believed . . . in that day" (II Thess. i. 10).

"Behold, I tell you a mystery: We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" (II Cor. xv. 51 - 55).

"The Lord Jesus Christ . . . shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory" (Phil. iii. 20 - 21).

"For it became him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Heb. ii. 10).

"And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God" (Rev. xxi. 10 - 11).

WE have, first of all, to take a far backward look to remind ourselves that, when God made man, He constituted him with a view to transfiguration: that is, with a view to Divine glory. That was His intention. But man revolted against God and committed spiritual suicide and, in his rebel-

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lion and failure, forfeited that wonderful destiny ; and, as we have read, God instantly pronounced 'Vanity' upon the whole creation, or, as we expressed it earlier in this series, wrote at the heart of this creation and of man: 'Disappointment'. But God made His appointment with another man, the Man after His own heart, His own Son, who became Son of Man ; and in that other Man, the Man Christ Jesus, eternal union was secured between those whom God foreknew as believers in Christ and His Son. He secured in His Son a new creation which could be transfigured or glorified. When we see the Lord Jesus in transfiguration on that mountain, we see in Him personally what the first Adam ought to have come to—man glorified, man transfigured ; and when we read all these things later about being glorified together with Him, His bringing many sons to glory, our bodies being made like unto the body of His glory and the heavenly Jerusalem having the glory of God, and all those wonderful things, we just see the realisation of the original intention. This is what God meant to be from the beginning, and which might, without any trouble or tragedy, have taken place so much earlier, through man's triumph in the time of his probation and testing.

But it is all now consummated in Christ Jesus, the Man in the glory. Glory, as we are never tired of saying, is the gratification of God the Creator and of His whole creation. Glory is simply being able to say, in the full wonderful enjoyment and realisation: 'This is how it ought to be!' That is glory. You know that even in little ways. You perhaps do not call it glory, but you feel it. If anything is just as you feel it ought to be, then inside you have a touch, a tinge, of glory. But conceive of mankind as a whole, and the whole creation, being just as they were meant to be, and everybody, without reservation or question, being able to say, 'Well, this is as it ought to be!'—and that is glory. And when God can say—and His standard is very high, it is absolute—when God from His standpoint can say, 'This is exactly as it ought to be, as I intended it to be': well, that indeed will be the day of glory.

That, then, is the consummation of this union with Christ, the union which we have been considering from its various aspects. The eternal union of being chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world ; the creational and racial union of our being a new creation in Christ Jesus as the last Adam, the second Man ; the marital union when the bride shall have made herself ready, when all those affectional relationships between Him and her and her and Him have been brought to fulness, when no longer any question or doubt, hesitation

or reservation of confidence exists: a perfect merging of two lives, His and His Church's—the marriage supper of the Lamb: this is the consummation of that. Further, the vocational union where the house of God has been established and God's heavenly order has been set up and manifested ; the functional union of the Body of Christ, where that Body has served for the manifestation of Himself as its indwelling personality ; and vital union, organic union, where His life, His Divine heavenly life, has brought the organism to its perfect expression and fulfilment. These are the aspects of union, all of which are taken up in this ultimate consummation—the consummation of all His glory.

Now you see that, in the passages we have read, all of which deserve much fuller consideration than we are giving them, this consummation is viewed in various ways and connections.

First we note the individual consummation, spiritual and physical. There are the individual sons being brought to glory, and in being brought to glory the individual physical body is transformed. It is a wonderful statement: "the body of our humiliation (shall) be conformed to the body of his glory"—all doctors and nurses out of a job, and all undoubtedly very glad to be so! All that realm of things finished, wound up ; bodies of glory, glorified bodies "like unto the body of His glory". It is called the change from corruptible to incorruptible. How marvellous—incapable of being corrupted!

Oh, we would like to stop for a little while on the resurrection body of the Lord Jesus. It was a most wonderful thing, that raising of the Lord Jesus from the dead. Joseph begged the body of Jesus, and then, being given it, he and Nicodemus bought a hundred pounds' weight of embalming spices. It is a fairly good weight, a hundred pounds! You can picture those two old fellows carrying that tremendous load. And then they wrapped Him in the linen garment, and inside the garment all that weight of spices was wrapped up. And when they came into the tomb ; after His resurrection they found it all there in order—no scattering of the spices all over the tomb ; it is all there in order, the shape is unaltered. He has come through it all. Just as He passed through the closed doors later on, He has come out and left the shell. That is some indication of what a glorified body can do.

To be "conformed to the body of his glory": that is an individual consummation of union with Christ. The spirit is already joined with Him. "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (I Cor. vi. 17), and that union of spirit is going to be consummated in a glorification of body, a new body of glory. That is the end of it. We have seen the cor-



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porate aspect of it. There are sons, but there is a seed. It is the same thing under another title or designation. It is the corporate Body of Christ: the Church glorified, "having the glory of God". The Church, having been His Body, having been in this manifold union with Him, is going to be a "glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing"; the Church of glory having the glory of God.

And then—wonderful passage!—Christ is going to be vindicated in His saints, Christ vindicated in those in whom He has been dwelling. "He shall come to be glorified *in* his saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believed": Christ vindicated in His saints—a glorious thing. We who, here and now in this world, have been despised, who have been thought little or nothing of, we who have been set aside, who have been maligned, have been persecuted, who have suffered simply because Christ is in us, simply because of our union with Christ—oh, what it has meant, what it has sometimes cost!—that Christ in us is going to be glorified in us and marvelled at in us. The scene is going to change: the indwelling of Christ is not always going to be a thing which means suffering, adversity, persecution, sorrow and trial. The indwelling of Christ ultimately in the consummation is going to be a most glorious thing—glorified in His saints and marvelled at. We can understand that, if we view Him objectively, we shall marvel at Him when we see Him. But here the statement is that He is going to be marvelled at in all them that have believed. It is the vindication of Christ and the vindication of the saints.

Now let us note that this is not only a future prospect. We could get excited about our visions and our dreams, our illusions—as they might be. We could have these wonderful ideas and conceptions, simply because they constitute the Christian faith. Christians believe such things as these. These are the things which go to make up what is called the religion of Christianity. But it is not just that. Oh, no: Christianity is, being different from all other religions, subject to experiment. It allows of being put to the test, and it stands up to the test and bears present evidence of its full reality. The hopes and expectations and anticipations of Christians are not just and only lying in the future. In the day in which you and I become, or in which any man or woman becomes, joined to the Lord, in a definite act, there is instantly an evidence of the ultimate glory.

Your experience and history may bear that out—so much so, that you find yourself looking back to those days, to the beginning, almost with longing eyes, with a wistful heart. There are people

who sing, and who sing quite in accordance with their spirit:—

'Where is the blessedness I knew  
When first I saw the Lord?  
Where is the soul-refreshing view  
Of Jesus and His Word?'

'Return, O holy Dove, return:  
Sweet messenger of rest!'

They go on,

'The dearest idol I have known,  
Whate'er that idol be,  
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,  
And worship only thee.'

Yes, many have come to have to sing like that; but whether you sing like that or not, whether that is true or not—and it ought *not* to be true of Christians—there is always a looking back to those first days. For many of us it is like that. I remember so clearly my own first days and months, when the Lord got a full, clear, free way in my heart and life; they were wonderful. Not that they have not been wonderful since! But what happened? Why, we just had a taste of the glory! The evidence was born there and then that we were made for glory: our coming into the new creation in Christ Jesus is at once sealed and stamped with the destiny of the new creation—glory. God's new beginnings are always with glory.

But this is not only at the beginning—it happens repeatedly in the course of the Christian life. Sadly enough, we do not just go straight on without some tumbles, falls, blunders, sinning, slipping up, making grievous and sad mistakes in our Christian life, and when we do it the enemy is not slow to rush in and seek to put us right out altogether. We begin to feel very sad and very sorry for ourselves, and down we go; our spirits droop, and we get locked up with this thing. The glory has gone, and we think it is never going to come back again. But then somehow the Lord says something to us. He speaks to us again His word of reassurance, and the thing is put right; we lay hold in faith again, and the glory comes back. The Lord has not forsaken us, the destiny is not lost—it comes back again.

We go away from the Lord and we are miserable. There is no glory in being away from the Lord. You can see the difference between people when they were going on with the Lord and what they are now. But come back and you find glory is waiting. It is the experience again and again in our lives. The glory is waiting: we were made for it: our union with Christ is the assurance of it.

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Our drifting from Christ suspends the glory: we come back and it is there again. Get a controversy with the Lord, or let the Lord have a controversy with you—something about which the Lord has spoken, something that He has indicated as not according to His mind, or perhaps some experience, trial, difficulty, through which He allows us to pass—and we become bitter, sour, grieved; we allow ourselves to be gripped in the cold hand of that grievance with the Lord, and the glory all goes. But when we come back and put right the thing that the Lord has required, or return to the Lord and hand over the grievance, and say, 'Well, this is only ruining the whole of my life, spoiling everything; it must not remain; I am going on with the Lord whatever it costs'—the glory comes back.

This glorification at the end is no fiction and it is no mere future expectation. It is a thing to which the Holy Spirit is witnessing all the way along. And may that not be one of the reasons why He brings about these crises in our lives—so that we shall not take too much for granted, that there shall be something continuously or repeatedly wonderful in our union with Christ? But what is the real purpose of these crises? Why does the Lord bring these crises in our lives? When we come up against things or are taken through difficult experiences and the necessity arises for some fresh adjustment, some fresh letting go, what is it all about? Well, you see, it all amounts to just this—making more room for the Lord Jesus: because it is Christ who is the ground of glory; God's appointment is with His Son. Away from His Son it is disappointment; but when the Son gets a fuller place, a larger place, in us—perhaps through a crisis, through a battle, a readjustment—when He gets a fuller place there is still more ground for the glory of God. It is Christ in us who is the hope of glory; it is Christ in us who is the ground of glory. It is, in other words, our union with Christ that is to issue in glory, and as that union becomes deeper, stronger, fuller, more settled, so the ground for glory increases. We seem, as we go on in the Christian life, to have deeper crises all the way along. Somehow or other we come to the place where we think we have touched bottom, we can never go deeper; then we do get taken into some-

thing deeper, and the situation seems more hopeless than ever; but the Lord brings us through, and there is more life than ever, more of the Lord than ever, more glory than ever. Well, the word in the New Testament is: "the Spirit of glory . . . resteth upon you" (I Pet. iv. 14). The way to glory is the suffering: as it was with the Head, so it must be with the members; as it was with the Master, so it must be with the servant; as with Him, so with us. It is the suffering and the glory—that is the way.

I will close there. It is the glorious end that is in view, and the end, let me repeat, can be put to the test now. You will perhaps remember my saying on former occasions that with me the matter of the Lord's coming does not rest and remain just as a matter of prophecy. I do not find a very great deal of exhilaration and inspiration in studying prophecy about the coming of the Lord. That is all right—do not misunderstand me! If you like to study prophecy, study it; but it does not always result in glory. But I do find this, that when we sing about the Lord's coming, it is not just the effervescence and enthusiasm of a few people singing. Something extra seems to come in, and that something extra is the Spirit of glory: because the Holy Spirit is not past, present and future—the Holy Spirit is timeless. The Holy Spirit is eternally now—eternity in any one minute. With the Holy Spirit, the coming of the Lord Jesus is as though it were now. Speak of the coming, and the Holy Spirit says, 'Yes, here is the evidence of it!' He gives it in the midst of the saints, and something of the glory is there when you sing about the coming of the Lord. It is not just a reminder that things are going to be better in the future. It is a touch and a taste of that future coming into the 'now'. That is a good note on which to close: a note of the present reality of these things, all put to the test and experienced *now*, because the glory is not only future. We have the Spirit of glory resting upon us *now*, to attest the end all along the way. May the Lord keep us Christians like that, living in the spiritual good of our faith; not upon doctrine alone, not upon truths, but in the reality of those things in the Holy Spirit *now*.

T.A.S.

from page 96  
Tampa, Florida \$7; Tucson, Arizona \$2.25; Upper Darby, Penna. \$2; Winchester, Mass. \$2.  
Total \$295.80  
(American)  
Frankston, Victoria 5s. (Australian)

Coboconk, Ont. \$1; Dundalk, Ont. \$5; Toronto, Ont. \$1. Total \$7.00 (Canadian)  
Chitaldrug, India Rs. 5.  
Heidelberg, Transvaal 4s. 9d. (South African)  
Basle, Switzerland Swiss Francs 20

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## THE CHALLENGE OF THE COMING DAY

## "LET US DRAW NEAR"

*Reading : Hebrews x. 19 - 25.*

NO reader of the Old Testament needed to have explained to him what 'The Day' was, for the prophets were full of the announcement of that great day, and Isaiah especially repeats over and over again such phrases as "in that day", "in the latter days", "it shall come to pass in that day". There is only one day that matters for this world and for God: it is the day when God really breaks in among men and destroys for ever the separation that now exists between heaven and earth. You will find in the New Testament that there are two sides to it: one is a dark side, a dreadful side; but there is also the bright and the glorious side of His appearing.

Now the prophets saw that day in the distance—in the very far distance; but you notice the Lord's word to us in Hebrews x. 25 is: "ye see the day drawing nigh". And we do, do we not? I will not spend time 'preaching to the converted'—in other words, trying to explain why we believe that the day of the Lord is near—because I am quite sure you believe it as much as I do, and our hearts respond, as the Spirit witnesses in them, to the witness of the Word and the witness of events round about, dark and lowering and threatening as many of them are. They all say one thing: the Day, the great Day, the only Day that really matters—*The Day* is drawing nigh! Praise God for the assurance!

What sort of day will it prove to be for us who love Him? It will prove to be a day of perfect communion. We shall meet Him and know Him face to face. It will also be the day of perfect fulfilment. We shall not have any more question then about the promises of God—if we have now—or about the faithfulness of God. It will be the day of absolute assurance and certainty. It was all right; even when it seemed most wrong, it was all right. "He is faithful that promised". And thirdly, it will be the day of perfect unity, when all the Lord's people shall find how much it means to them, and still more how much it means to the Lord, that they should be one in heart.

OUR RESPONSIBILITY IN THE  
LIGHT OF THAT DAY

Now you will have noticed in our reading that what the Lord intends to do in that great day

brings upon us a responsibility to do something now, in the light of it, which is in correspondence with it. The letter to the Hebrews has many key phrases, and one of them is this little phrase "let us". 'It is all very well', says the Apostle, 'to be praising the Lord for what He has done or is going to do; but let us respond'. And you will find, in the light of this great day, and in the words of the servant of the Lord, "so much the more as we see that day drawing near", we have a responsibility in the light of the three great matters which I have mentioned.

Perfect communion: verse 22, "let us draw near". We rejoice that we shall see Him face to face. Are we having the benefit of what we might have now of such communion? Are we being prepared for that great day? What is the preparation? "Let us draw near".

For the perfect realisation and fulfilment of all the will of God: verse 23, "let us hold fast". It is all very well, in the glory, when it has all happened, to say, "He is faithful that promised"; but the Lord wants us to be saying it now and living it now. "Let us hold fast . . . without wavering . . . so much the more as we see the day approaching".

And thirdly, in the light of the perfect unity, let us stand together—I think that is the best way of summing up verses 24 - 25.

COMMUNION WITH THE LORD THE  
CLIMAX OF DOCTRINE AND  
EXHORTATION

I just want to say a few words about the first of those exhortations—"let us draw near . . . so much the more, as ye see the day drawing nigh". Of all the other exhortations—let us do this and let us do that—surely this is the peak and climax. Indeed, I think it is the end to which all the arguments of this letter have been tending. The doctrines are all now set forth in fulness, the truth is established, the way is made clear. What is it all for? What is God's purpose? What are we being led up to? Surely this heart-to-heart, face-to-face, access to God within the veil. That is the Lord's great desire: for that He has been working and for that He has given His own Son—that we might draw near. And is that not just what your heart responds to as your greatest and deepest desire—to come nearer to the Lord, that the Lord might come nearer to you?



## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

SOME OF THE MEANS WHICH FAIL  
TO BRING US NEAR

"Let us draw near." How do you do it? Not, quite clearly and manifestly, by mere religion. Some are saying nowadays that what we need is more religion. You could not say that about the Hebrews. They had all that there was of religion. It did not draw them near to God, and it does not do so. Not more godly leaders: for surely the great argument of the letter to the Hebrews is that even the greatest, most holy figures in all the history of the people of God, men of the Spirit and men of faith as they were, could not get the people near to God, and however much you may learn to admire or to praise God for His servants, you do not draw near to God by devotion or attachment to the servants of God. Nor even blessings: we may feel that the blessings and the goodness of the Lord draw us nearer to Him. Well, they do for a moment, somehow, when we are extra grateful; but what blessings Israel had, what marvellous blessings, what deliverances, what rich provision, and yet all the blessings failed to bring them to God, though they were meant to do so. And shall we not say, in the light of this letter to the Hebrews, that even service for God does not necessarily bring us near to God? The Book is taken up a good deal with men of the Levitical and priestly orders, who did nothing else but serve God. That is the ideal of most Christians—to be in whole-time service. Well, they were in whole-time service, but in spite of it all they never got within the veil: yet God wanted them to, and He wants us to; and now He bids us, urges us, to draw near.

A NEW AND LIVING WAY  
THROUGH THE VEIL, HIS FLESH

I have sought to mention some of the means which fail to bring us near. What is the one way into this life of closest, intimate, living fellowship with God? It is to pass through the veil. The glorious message of the Saviour who was crucified is that there is now "a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say", adds the writer, "his flesh". How can the flesh of the Lord Jesus be likened to the veil? Surely His incarnation, His life as a man, cannot be likened to the veil! Surely His incarnation, His life as a man, cannot be likened to that which was a hindrance to communion with God, as the veil was! Surely the Man Christ Jesus is not the one who keeps us from God! How then can we say that His flesh is like the veil?

I think because we have not quite understood the meaning of the veil. The veil was not an iron cur-

tain and was never meant to be. The veil in the purpose of God in its highest spiritual meaning was meant to give a message to men, a message which in effect said, How wonderful, how attractive, how desirable it is to enter into the presence of God! Oh, that I could be there! It draws me on. It is beautiful, resplendent, all the time attracting me and making me desire that above all else—not out of curiosity, but because I know that there is the sum total of all blessedness. The veil says, Oh, if you could only enter in! And is that not exactly what the life of the Lord Jesus said to men, to those who really saw something of the spiritual meaning of it?

THE ATTRACTION AND BEAUTY  
OF THE VEIL

Yes, He is like the veil in that—in that He stands between men and God: not in the first place desiring to exclude them and to set them far off and to make it impossible for them to come, but to beckon them on, to say, 'There is something beautiful behind this'. They saw it in the life of the Lord Jesus—that was just what the veil meant. 'There is an extreme blessedness, there is something eminently desirable behind it all'. What is it? It is fellowship with God. The Lord Jesus as a Man sets before us the wonderful, satisfying fullness of living in nearness to God. He, in many ways, was the loneliest Man that ever walked this earth, and yet He was the most satisfied Man—full of that infinitely blessed heart rest which comes to the one who knows and enjoys perfect love. When the disciples realised how near to God He lived, they came to Him one day and said, 'Lord, teach us to pray'; but they never got so far as saying, 'Teach us to pray as Thou dost'—that they felt was impossible. They said, "Lord, teach us to pray, even as John also taught his disciples" (Luke xi. 1). 'We cannot be like You, but teach us something of approach to God.'

## THE SATISFACTION OF LOVE

But it was not only in the prayer life of the Lord Jesus that He thus lived in fellowship with the Father and found that satisfaction of love. It was all the time. You remember the story of the woman at the well of Samaria: how they came to Him offering Him meat and drink, and He did not need it; He was a satisfied man. And they turned to one another and said, 'Where has He got His satisfaction from?' He answered them, "I have meat to eat that ye know not" (John iv. 32). I have sometimes felt that the Lord found His joy in service:

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but that cannot be so, because the disciples also served the Lord, they also preached, they also healed; the Lord Jesus said, "I have meat to eat that ye know not".

No, it was not the service; it was *nearness to God*, in the service—for you will notice that the moment at which the disciples interrupted the Lord Jesus in talking to the woman was the moment when He had got to the real heart of what mattered to Him, which was: 'The Father seeketh worshippers in spirit and in truth'. It was not as though the Lord Jesus was saying, 'Here is another soul to be saved, another bit of work to be done, something therefore to justify My name as a worker, as an evangelist; I find My joy and satisfaction in doing things'. No! It was looking upon the most unlikely person in the area and saying, 'Here is one whom the grace of God can bring near to the Father, who can afford new sweetness and joy to the Father's heart; from eternity He has been desiring worshippers'; and, as He spoke to her, all His will, mind and thought was not upon the work He was doing but upon the satisfaction of the Father's heart. He lived, He literally lived, within the veil, and His life spoke to the disciples, as the veil was meant to speak to the worshippers, saying, 'What blessed experiences there are, even in service, that you know nothing about!'

#### THE TRIUMPH OF PEACE

And also it said to them, I am sure, or rather provoked in them something of this reaction—'I wish we did! Oh, to get within the veil; oh, to serve God like that; oh, to find that kind of satisfaction in the love of God!' So, through all His life, those who lived closest to Him were beckoned on, made to know how different life is without the veil from what it is within the veil; the peace, the calm, of that most sublime experience. We recall the occasion when they were in that tempest on the lake. It must have been, I think, quite an unusual thing. No doubt it was diabolical in its origin. Fishermen do not get frightened by winds and waves, especially on a comparatively small lake like Galilee. But they got frightened. In the dark horror of that experience there was something they had never met before. And where was the Lord Jesus? Was He worried? Oh no! In any way distressed or perturbed? Not a bit! Men say that is because He was God and they were men. Does God go to sleep? The Lord Jesus was asleep. Truly God, yes, but living a true human life in spite of that. He was asleep. When they woke Him up, and He calmed the winds and the waves, I am sure they must have caught a glimpse of the veil, and must have said,

'I wish I was like Him! In the storms and the stresses, in the midst of them, to have that calm, serene peace—I wish I was like Him!' His life was a beautiful invitation and attraction.

#### THE RENDING OF THE VEIL

But it was nevertheless a veil in the sense that it was an exclusion. They wanted to be *like Him*, but they could not be like Him. You cannot imitate experiences of that kind, and they could not get within the veil till God in His great mercy did what He had been waiting to do through all the centuries—opened up the veil. He gave a token of it in the fact that, when the Lord Jesus died, literally the veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom—a miracle to men but a very small thing to God. It was nothing to God to tear a curtain. Ah, but the reality was something to God. It was like tearing open His dear Son. No, the veil unrent may be an attraction and an invitation, but it is also an exclusion. It says: 'It is different in here; you are not fit to come in here, you have no right; there is no way of access'. But in the death of His Son, God, in infinite grace, rent the veil; and now He says to all who come in, 'Here is a new way: not the way of religion, not the way of service, not the way of man's efforts at all; a new way, the way of grace, the way of the shed Blood, a living way'. The Saviour Himself will lead us into this access, and now sets before us a life, not to mock us nor even to make us wistful, but a life which God offers to give to us. He says, 'What My Son was, you can be; His life within the veil is for you—it is for you to share that life'. By the Blood He has opened up a new, living way into His very presence.

#### "LET US DRAW NEAR"

"So much the more, as ye see the day drawing nigh." What is the greatest and most important preparation for the coming of the Lord? It is that God's people should draw nearer to the Lord and find more of the realities of life within the veil. You will notice that this exhortation is repeated twice in the letter to the Hebrews. Chapter iv. 16 says, "Let us . . . draw near", but in that case it is an invitation to draw near in time of need. I think we do that fairly easily. That is the time when we do draw near. We need grace, we need help, we need the Lord. Well, thank God, we can draw near. His throne is a throne of grace. The High Priest who is there knows our needs and longs to meet them. Never let us apologize for our coming to God in our troubles and with our

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

troubles—that is what we ought to do, and the sooner we do it and the more often we do it, the more shall we prove the fulness of His grace. Let us, by all means—let us draw near.

But this is not quite the same. You may not be in any conscious need, it may not be a time of stress, there may not be any particular ministry which makes you pray, any particular call upon you which drives you to seek the Lord. That is the time when it is more important still to heed His voice. He does not only want you to come with your troubles; He wants you to come with your love. He is not only inviting us to come and find

help; He is inviting us to come and minister to Him. "Let us draw near . . . so much the more, as ye see the day drawing nigh." When that day comes, there will not be any troubles, any fears, any needs that take us to Him in prayer. They will all be over. No more tears, no more suffering, no more need. Thank God! Shall we then say, 'I do not need the Lord any more, I shall not have to pray any more'? No, we shall say, 'I need Him a thousand times more! I need to know His life, to enjoy Him more fully, and that He may enjoy me and be glorified in me'. So much the more as we see the day approaching, let us draw near.

H. F.

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRIST

## IV IN RELATION TO HIS KNOWLEDGE

*"And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. ii. 16-17).*

*"And the woman said unto the serpent, Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat" (Gen. iii. 2-6). "And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever—therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden" (Gen. iii. 22-23).*

*"For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. i. 21). "We speak wisdom, however, among them that are fullgrown: yet a wisdom not of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nought: but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, even the wisdom that hath been hidden, which God foreordained before the ages unto our glory: which none of the rulers of this age hath known: for had*

*they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. ii. 6-8, R. V. mg.).*

THE Lord Jesus did not come into this world as God incarnate, taking human form, merely for His own sake, to do something in isolation, in His isolated Person, and go away again, as though He had accomplished His life-work and that was that. The fundamental fact of our faith is that the Lord Jesus is God's basis and model for the constitution of every child of His. Christ is very vitally related to us. God's thought is: "as he is, so are we". We are "foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son". The significance of Christ for us is a very real, very vital one.

Our significance, therefore—and our hearts must be wholly set upon being, as utterly as God has made possible, men or women of God—our significance in this universe must therefore be the significance of Christ. Exactly what *He* signifies, we have got to signify, and so it is for us to understand, to grasp, to see, by Divine enablement, what is the nature of Christ's significance.

## HIS SIGNIFICANCE NOT OF THIS WORLD

We have seen that His significance was altogether outside of this world and its standards, its ideas, its mentality. It was another significance. It was the impact of something other upon this world and in this world. It was not just an influence, it was not something abstract. It was the very nature of His humanity. He was a Man in possession of certain things which no other man possessed. All the race beside Him did not possess the things which He possessed, and those things are the things which are going to give us our significance,



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as the significance of Christ. For there is no doubt about it—these things do make people significant.

#### THE NATURE OF HIS POWER

We spoke in our last meditation of the nature of His power. With the world's ideas of power it had nothing in common. It was power which worked through utter selflessness, meekness, humility, so far as He Himself was concerned; emptiness, absolute dependence upon sources outside of Himself. That was the position He had accepted voluntarily. But He would not have been such a man of power if He had had it in Himself. Why should He spend all night in prayer before He would allow Himself to choose the men who were to be His disciples and later His apostles? He would not allow Himself to do that out from Himself. It was necessary for Him to be able to say later, "I know whom I have chosen" (John xiii. 18), and any man making choice for such responsibility would naturally never have chosen those men—least of all Judas Iscariot. "Did not I choose you the twelve, and one of you is a devil?" (John vi. 70). He spent all night in prayer before He did it. Many other pointers there are to His power not being in Himself but being drawn from another source. It is just the exact opposite of the world's ideas of power.

#### THE ASSOCIATION OF KNOWLEDGE WITH POWER

Now I come to another point in connection with that—the association of *knowledge* with power. There is a saying, 'Knowledge is power'. That may in a sense be true in the natural world. It certainly is true in the spiritual world. But natural knowledge is not powerful in the spiritual world. We have only to go back to the passages in Genesis that we read, to see that the idea primarily was one of power. 'New power is going to be reached by way of knowledge: knowledge is going to bring to power'—so the devil said, and so the woman came to believe, and the man and the race. Knowledge and power. Yes, it is true, it is quite true. The lie of the devil was not in that he said, in effect, 'Knowledge is power'. The lie was, "Ye shall be as God"; that is, 'You will be able to dispense with God, you will be as God yourself; you will have the power in yourself, and that will make you equal with God, and you will have the secret of life, the secret of pre-eminence, the secret of dominion; you will have it in your own hands, in yourself'. The lie was there.

The truth was that in the day that their soul-eyes were opened, when they acquired a soulish or psychical knowledge, in that day their spiritual eyes

closed. In the day that they saw in one realm, they became blind for ever in another. The whole race was blinded by seeking knowledge—not by knowledge in itself, for knowledge is not evil, it is not wrong—but by seeking knowledge as personal power, to give personal advantage and to glorify the flesh, to glorify man. The end, as we said earlier, is man's undoing. The more he knows, the more by his knowledge he brings the race into proximity to utter destruction.

#### THE NATURE OF CHRIST'S KNOWLEDGE

Let us come to the Lord Jesus. The significance of the Lord Jesus was His knowledge. His power worked by way of His knowledge. It was not just putting forth force. His power was because of His knowledge. But what was the nature and basis of His knowledge? The nature of His knowledge was that He knew God, He knew the Father; He knew heaven's standpoint, heaven's standards. He knew eternal laws and principles. He knew with the knowledge of heaven—that was His power. It was spiritual knowledge which He possessed. They could not understand. As we said, He was a stranger in this world. They did not understand. "*Whence hath this man this wisdom . . . ?*" (Matt. xiii. 54). They referred to what seemed to them to be His store of information. He could speak about almost anything. He could speak about the sea, He could speak about boats, He could speak about fishes, He could speak about everything on a farm; He could speak about anything. That was impressive enough, but that was not the thing that perplexed them. There was something more than that. "*He taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes*" (Matt. vii. 29), who were the knowledgeable people according to this world. There was some element in His knowledge which defeated every attempt of theirs to fathom. It was spiritual knowledge, and that spiritual knowledge met men's need as nothing else met that need—when men's hearts were open to be met and when they realised that they had a need. It met need in the deepest way for man.

Of course, we know that ourselves. You know very well the difference between information and Divine spiritual knowledge. If the Lord speaks spiritually, how utterly satisfying it is, how it meets us right deep down in our being, how it is food, how it is life! But the mere imparting of Bible or religious information—that is another thing in another realm. It may be the cleverest person doing it: it does not touch us. I have lately been trying to read a book on doctrine. Christian doc-

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

trine, by an eminent religious scholar who took a whole year off from his work at Oxford University in order to write it. I had to read every sentence two or three times before I knew what he was talking about. I thought: 'Something has happened to me, I have lost out—I can't cope with this!' Until I met a man who is miles and miles ahead of me intellectually and I said, 'Have you encountered such and such a book?' He said, 'Yes, but it is a weariness to the flesh; I do not know what the man is talking about!' That was a great comfort to me, purely naturally, in the flesh! But, you see, that kind of approach, in dealing with the things of God, is death.

But when the Lord Jesus spoke, He spoke out of knowledge which was not of that kind. "The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life" (John vi. 63), and the hungry heart knew it and ever has known it. There is a knowledge which we, like the Lord Jesus, may possess. He is not apart from us in this. He accepted our position, to have, in the days of His flesh, all things as we may have them. In saying that, nothing is taken from His Deity, His Godhead; but I must accept His absolute humanity, and that, for the duration of that humanity, He, of His own will, accepted our position—to go our way, and not to have power in Himself, but to have it only in God and to obtain it all from God. The purity of His Spirit, of course, made for possibilities beyond anything we can imagine. "The pure in heart . . . shall see God" (Matt. v. 8), and therefore He could see and discern and perceive as perhaps we never shall. But, on the same basis, we are permitted to have knowledge, of an order, in a realm, which means the very heart satisfaction of others and which, being that, is a power beyond anything that is academic, however great it may be. It is heart knowledge and heart satisfaction that matters. It is that that is going to make you and me men and women of God. In a word, we shall be men and women of God just in proportion to our spiritual knowledge of the Lord. That is our measure as men and women before God.

"Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he hath understanding, and knoweth me" (Jer. ix. 23 - 24).

THE AUTHORITY AND POWER  
OF CHRIST'S KNOWLEDGE

Then I said that He spoke with authority. His knowledge gave Him an authority. It was not official authority—it was not that God had placed Him

in a position of official authority. It was the authority of spiritual knowledge. He could speak straight out, without the slightest wavering in His certainty. 'Moses said'—and Moses was a great authority—"but I say unto you" (Matt. v). Here is an authority transcending Moses. 'The scribes and Pharisees say, but I say . . .' It was not just the asserting, self-sufficient, self-assured declaration of some conviction. It came out of a hidden secret knowledge which brought Him absolute certainty. He could say it, and commit Himself and everything to what He said. I very often hesitate to say some things that I say, and I often keep things back on the point of saying them, and sometimes when I am thinking of things beforehand, I make up my mind I am not going to say that, not because it is not true, but because I am afraid of the consequences. The Lord Jesus never had a reservation. He could say a thing, and know that sooner or later that would come about and they would have to acknowledge that He had spoken the truth.

Think of some of the things that He said. Speaking of the temple, He said, "There shall not be left here one stone upon another" (Matt. xxiv. 2). 'Before this generation passes away, Jerusalem will be compassed about with armies; families will be betraying one another; the most ghastly things will be happening here'. "This generation shall not pass away, until all these things be accomplished" (Mark xiii. 30). Was it true? Fifty years later it all happened to the very letter. That is only an outstanding example of what I mean. He could commit Himself absolutely to what He said, knowing that sooner or later it would be proved, because it was true. And if you and I are on His basis, taught by His Spirit, something of that significance will come into our lives also. People will say—That is what So-and-so said, and there it is; it is just what they said. That is power by knowledge. Oh, it is not just using power for self-vindication or self-justification. I am speaking of power like that of the Lord Jesus—of His knowledge being His power and the power of tremendous authority.

So I could go round the clock and touch on all sorts of things relating to authority, relating to His hidden knowledge giving Him His significance in this universe. It was what He knew that gave Him His significance; not what He did only, but what He knew. If you know the secret, you are in a position of great power. Some years ago I tried to illustrate this. An engineering firm sent in an account for some work they had done. The account was a very heavy one, and the people who were asked to pay sent it back and questioned it. 'This is much too heavy! We want you to explain why you are charging us so much'. And the engineering firm

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sent it back again, detailing the account item by item: materials—so much; time and labour—so much; so they itemised it. But that did not amount to the whole, that did not account for the total, by a long way. There was still a large balance, and this was summed up by one item: 'To knowing how'! It would never have been done otherwise. There was all the material, all the labour, all the time—but 'knowing how' is the big thing.

### THE COST OF SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE

And it is the costly thing. This spiritual knowledge is costly. It is like power, as we said in our last meditation. It is Calvary knowledge. The Cross will have to strike very hardly and deeply into our own certainties, our own self-assurance, our own self-confidence in what we think—yes, into that whole store of knowledge that we thought gave us significance. It will have to strike deep into us until we have to say, 'I do not know, I do not understand; I cannot follow, I cannot see. What is it that the Lord is doing with me? There is an end to all my own understanding!' Spiritual knowledge comes by way of the Cross, as every other spiritual thing does. It is Calvary knowledge. It is the weak things who have been broken by the application of the Cross who become the powerful factors in the realm that counts most.

"Behold your calling, brethren"—in other words, 'You see your calling, brethren: how you are called, the basis of your calling'. "Not many wise . . . not many mighty, not many noble . . . God chose the foolish things of the world" (1 Cor. i. 26 - 27); because it is not the wisdom of this world and the strength of this world—it is another kind. Have you noticed how some who are very ignorant and foolish so far as this world is concerned, some who would never pass an examination, who could not answer a general knowledge paper of the most ordinary kind,—how, when they have come to the Lord and come under the power and instruction of the Holy Spirit, they begin to take on significance and weight, and how very often it is just to such people that others needing help go? That is the thing that makes for significance—knowledge of the Lord. How often, on the other hand, have we found those who, according to this world, are tremendously advanced, very knowledgeable and very highly educated, have the very best scientific knowledge and equipment—and yet they are like little babes in spiritual things. I confess that I have often been taken aback by that. I have thought, Here is someone who is very intelligent: with their great academic achievements and accomplishments, and their very able minds,

they will be able to understand things and we shall have a good time. We have started off, and soon they have taken on a far away look and do not know what you are talking about, and we do not get anywhere at all.

I am not saying, of course, that that is always so. When the Countess of Huntingdon heard that passage read—"not many noble"—she said: 'Thank God, it says "not many"—there can be some!' I am not saying it is necessary to be without education in order to have spiritual knowledge, nor am I saying it is necessary to have it. But spiritual knowledge is of another order, something different altogether, and it is that that gives the meaning. If you know the Lord, if you have that opened heaven, that which the Lord Jesus had of a life with God, a walk with God, a fellowship with God, you will count for something, not only as an influence, but as one who has the secret for other people, who can help by enlightenment and instruction, who has something to give—and oh, how much that is needed! Is it not true that the poor, weak, retarded state of the mass of Christians to-day is due to the absence of a teaching ministry that is truly under the Holy Spirit? Surely it is! We can see what is bound up with this matter of spiritual knowledge, spiritual understanding, in giving significance.

Now I started here—do you really want to be a man of God, a woman of God, as swiftly as it is possible for God to make you one? Then, if so, your heart will be set upon knowing the Lord more than anything else. It will be your one ambition, your one passion—to know the Lord. You will be seeking to walk with the Lord, to know the Lord—but it is going to cost you.

### FAITHFULNESS IN TESTIMONY

In our last study, in connection with power, we cited one or two passages of Scripture. "*Jews ask for signs, and Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto Jews a stumbling-block, and unto Gentiles foolishness*" (1 Cor. i. 22 - 23). And then, "*Blessed is he, whosoever shall find no occasion of stumbling in me*" (Matt. xi. 6). Now the offence of the Cross comes here in this matter. In order to be a man or woman of God, are you prepared to be called a fool, to be regarded as silly, weak, foolish—and the world does think Christians are foolish—and because you know that they think of Christians like that, are you either going to hide your light and not let them know too clearly that you are a Christian, or are you going to try to meet them on their own ground, and 'be up to them' with natural ability, thinking,



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deludedly, that you are going to win them, or are you going in some way to convince them by being as they are, taking their standards? Both of those courses, needless to say, are disastrous. The only way to be of real account in the eternal sense, in the heavenly sense, as a man or a woman of God, is to come right out with it, plainly, clearly, unreservedly—'I am a Christian, I belong to the Lord!'—and all that that means, risking everything upon a very clear testimony; leaving the Lord to support, to vindicate, but taking the consequences, which for the time being will probably be sneers, jeers, discounting, calling you names that hurt the flesh, perhaps ostracising or isolating you. But, sooner or later, your significance will come into light; sooner or later you will find that conditions are forcing men beyond their own resources to the need of something which you alone have got, and that God gives you the opportunity because of your faithfulness. God will never give you opportunities unless you have been faithful. You have to be faithful in the least before you have your opportunity increased.

## COUNTING FOR GOD

Does this matter to you—whether you are of that kind of significance or not, whether you count? Some of you have settled that long ago; but it is so easy to stand up and sing—especially with a tune that helps and is perhaps rather soulful—"Jesus, and shall it ever be, a mortal man ashamed of Thee?", and all those wonderful things that follow in that hymn; but is that true? You say that this is very elementary. Let it be elementary. I am going by elementary stages in order to get at the thing itself. The thing itself is this: you are counting, or you are not going to count, according to your measure of spiritual knowledge—your knowledge of the Lord. That can only be had in a walk with God as the Lord Jesus walked with the Father, and that is going to be by way of the Cross. It will be for us Calvary knowledge. It will mean that we are emptied of all self-resource, brought to the place—yes, many times—where, unless the Lord helps us, we are finished.

But that is the way of spiritual knowledge. That is what the Lord would bring us to, and here I close. We go through it as Christians—so much suffering, affliction, trial, adversity, disappointment—oh, yes, so much of it. But what is the meaning of it? Why does the Lord not shield His own loved children and spare them? Why does He allow them, perhaps more than any others, to know affliction and suffering and weakness? It is for this very thing. There is no other way now for

us to know the Lord, the flesh being what it is. If everything is going all right, if we are all hearty and well, we do not feel our need of the Lord, we do not go seeking the Lord with all our hearts. We can only know Him by the way of the working of the Cross, which is the death of ourselves, and the Lord will bring us to the place where He would have us and where we would say, in the time of affliction, There is something to learn in this, something to get out of this: something of the Lord is bound up with this. The enemy will have us revolt against the means the Lord uses, tempt us to break away from it, to escape it, to get out of the difficult place, to run away. The Lord would have us to say, In that difficult place, in that painful experience, there is something of knowledge of Him to be had. Do not allow yourself to be pressed out and do not run away. Say, Rather let me have this, if it has something of the Lord, than be free from it.

That is the way of stature, measure, manhood. We grow when we get there. That is significance. "The cup which the Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John xviii. 11). That is manhood, that is to be full-grown. Oh, the temptation for the easy way that was constantly pressed upon our Lord! 'The kingdoms of the world and the glory thereof—you can have them on the simple condition that you acknowledge me, the prince of this world!' It was the temptation to the easy way all along. 'Save yourself! Spare yourself! Get out of the difficulty by an easy short cut'. No, His very measure, His spiritual measure, meant refusing, repudiating, anything like that, and accepting the cost. This was the way of the Father, the knowledge of the Father.

I have tried to pass on to you something that is so difficult to explain. Let us sum it up again as we started. This is the kind of man and woman that is going to bear significance of the true kind, of the eternal kind, the kind that matters. It is those who know—whatever else they do *not* know—those who know the Lord. They may be like the man in the Gospel who is such a great example of this very thing. On the one side, there was the sin of Adam bringing blindness; on the other side, the works of the devil destroyed by the Son of man bringing sight to the blind. When challenged: 'What do you know about this man, what do you know about this and that?'—he replied, 'Oh, I do not know this and that, but whatever I do not know, there is one thing I do know—that, whereas I was blind, now I see' (John ix. 25). 'I know': that is authority, that is power—by seeing. The Lord wants witnesses like that—men and women who know Him because they have made it the one passion of their hearts to know Him, at any cost, at every cost. And, see-

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ing that this knowledge is by way of the Cross, through Jesus Christ crucified, every occasion is present for being offended—offended because of the foolishness from this world's standpoint, the

weakness by this world's standards. "Blessed is he, whosoever shall find no occasion of stumbling in me" (Matt. xi. 6). The Lord make us men and women of spiritual stature.

T. A-S.

## THE HISTORY OF CHRIST THE EXPERIENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN

### Part II

Reading: *I Cor. i. 30 ; Rom. vi. 6, 8, 9, 11 ; Eph. ii. 5-6 ; Col. ii. 9-12, 20 ; iii. 1, 3 ; Gal. ii. 20 ; v. 24 ; II Cor. v. 17-18 ; John xv. 1-4 ; Heb. xi. 1.*

### THE IMPORTANCE OF 'SUBSTANTIATING'

THE greatest thing that can happen to us is that we should stop seeking a history of our own. The beginning of our real spiritual life in Christ is when we say, 'Lord, from henceforth I will not seek to have my own history. My history is Your experience. Your experience is mine.' God has done it. God has included us in Christ. God has crucified us in Christ ; God has raised us in Christ ; God has put us far above all in Christ. How can we ever get into that? How can we see that?

That is why we read that verse in Hebrews, which I believe will be a help to us. I think we all know that Hebrews xi. 1 is the only definition of faith in the New Testament, indeed in the Scriptures. It is important to the understanding of spiritual truth really to know that definition. You remember, Hebrews xi. 1 gives the definition of faith as "the substance of things hoped for". Now, the word 'substance' is not a perfect translation, because the word in the Greek has in it the sense of an action, of motion ; it is not just some *thing*. Faith is not just a thing, a 'substance'. I confess that personally I spent a number of years trying to find a correct word to translate this. But the translation of J. N. D. is especially good concerning this word. "Faith is the *substantiating* of things hoped for." What a difference!

Now, what is substantiating? We are substantiating every day. We cannot live in the world without substantiating. Do you know the difference between substance and substantiating? A substance is an object ; substantiating means that I have a certain power making that substance to be *real* to me—that is substantiating. If I have not that power, then the substance is just as good as nothing to me. Now, all our senses are the powers or the faculties of substantiating. Take our eyes, our sight. We have colours: purple, blue, green, yellow, red. Now, they are real things ; they are substances—that is, substance in the Scriptural

sense—because they are real. But if I shut my eyes, then to me the colour is not a substance. If I am blind, then the colour is simply nothing to me. But I possess the power to substantiate: therefore yellow becomes yellow to me. It is not only that the substance is there, but I have the power to substantiate it. I have the power to make that substance to be true to me, to give it reality. That is the meaning of substantiating. All through our lives, every day, we use our senses of sight, smell, touch, hearing, to substantiate all the substances in the world to us.

Now, you cannot substantiate Divine things with any of these senses. There is only one faculty which can substantiate the "things hoped for"—the things of Christ, the things of God, the things unseen, invisible—and that is faith. Faith is the substantiating of the things in Christ. Hundreds and thousands of people are reading Romans vi. 6: "Our old man has been crucified with him". To faith it is true ; to doubt, and to mental assent without revelation, it is not true.

People have been saying, 'If everything is in Christ, everyone ought to have the same experience. Why do they not have the same experience?' It is only the difference of substantiating ; it is not the difference of substance. As far as substance goes, in Christ we possess the same thing ; every Christian possesses the same experience. His experience is our history just the same. To those who have substantiated, it is ; to those who have not substantiated, it still is there, but it is not here. If I shut my eyes to a substance, I cannot see it ; but I can only blame myself for not seeing. Someone who is blind cannot see it, but he cannot say the thing is not there: he can only say the thing is not there to him. Everything is in Christ—crucifixion, resurrection, ascension—but the thing is. Have we seen it, have we substantiated it? Now, in order to substantiate it, you must see it, so revelation must come. Oh, may the Lord open our eyes to see that we and Christ have been made one, with such a oneness as can never be broken. His history is our experience to-day. Something has already been done. When we see it, we jump up and praise the Lord and say, 'I have died!' We will not kneel down and seek it. We will simply say, 'Lord, I do

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not know how I could have been so silly as never to have seen that. It is done!' Revelation comes and there will be substantiating. That substantiating makes the things good to you. "Faith is the substantiating of things hoped for." It is the same with resurrection and ascension: it is all there. It is not that we should have it by ourselves, it is that we have it in Christ.

But if you see it without substantiating nothing happens. That is the trouble with many. Once I was with a group of people in the South of England, and I told them among other things what real faith is. They mistook me for one of another group of Christians—I do not want to give their designation—and they said to me, 'Mr. Nee, do you mean to say you are one of those people who say that they have got everything and yet have nothing?' That is the trouble with many. It is possible for us to say in words that we have got everything in Christ, that His experience is my history, but it is another thing to see it and substantiate it.

I do not seek anything as in this present year of grace. I substantiate the things in Christ. Time has no place in Christian experience. We have to rule that out altogether. Whatever there is in Christ, that is mine.

## ABIDING IN CHRIST

That brings us to our last passage, John xv. What does it mean to abide in Christ? It means to stay in, that is all. To abide does not mean to get in, but it does mean I should not get out. To abide simply means I stay in. I cannot stay in if I am not in. I can never stay in if I have not come in. I can only stay because I am already in. The Lord has not commanded us to get in. To get in is the work of God. I cannot include myself in Him. That is altogether beyond me, I have no part in it. Praise the Lord, it is God Himself who has put me into Christ. That is done, that is certain. What I have been told to do is to stay there. It simply means never looking at ourselves as those who are out of Christ. Never look at yourself as if you were not in Christ. So many Christians, dear saints in the Lord, try to get in. They pray, 'Lord, Thou art the vine. Wilt Thou make me to be a branch? I would like to be a branch, and have that life flowing through me, that fruit coming out in me'. You may pray that for years without getting any life, because you are treating yourself virtually as if you were out and trying to get in, and you never can. That is false humility. The thing is for the Lord to open our eyes to see that we are in—we are in Him.

Do you remember the story of Hudson Taylor, how he tried to get in? Writing to his sister he

said, 'I must now get into Christ. I know I must have His life flowing through me, but I have not got it, so I must get into Christ'. The more he tried to get in, the more he found that he could not, until light dawned, revelation came, he saw. He said, 'I see I am in! Praise the Lord, He is the vine, I am a branch. There is no need for me to try to be one—I *am* one'. Oh, it is a great thing to see that you are one.

I remember one day in Shanghai I was talking with a brother very exercised concerning his spiritual state. He said, 'So many are living beautiful, saintly lives. I am ashamed of myself. I call myself a Christian, and yet when I compare myself with the others, I feel I am not at all. I want to know this crucified life, this resurrection life, but I do not know it and see no way of getting there'. Another brother was there, and we had been talking two hours or so, trying to get him to see he could not have anything apart from Christ, but we failed. Another brother much used of the Lord came in. There was a thermos flask on the table, and this brother picked it up and said, 'What is this?' 'Oh, that is a thermos flask.' 'Well, you just imagine this thermos flask can pray, and now it starts praying something like this. "Lord, I want very much to be a thermos flask. Wilt Thou make me to be a thermos flask? Lord, give me grace, I want to be a thermos flask. Do please make me one!"'. What will you say?' That brother said, 'I do not think even a thermos flask could be so silly!' Then my brother said, 'You are doing the same thing. God in times past has already included you in Christ. When He died, you died. When He lived, you lived. Now to-day you cannot say, I want to die, I want to be crucified, I want to have a resurrection life. The Lord simply looks at you and says, You are dead! You have the life! and as long as you say, I want it and pray for it, you are just like the thermos flask. It is one, and yet it prays to be one! You are that, you need not pray for that!' But there must be light to see it. Light dawned on that man. With tears in his eyes, he said, 'Lord, I praise Thee that Thou hast already included me in Christ. All that He has is mine.' Faith had something to lay hold of, faith had seen something, and if you could have met that brother later on, what a change you would find. The history of the Lord becomes his history, his experience.

The point is not how we can get in: the point is, do not get out. We are always getting out and Satan is knocking us out, trying to keep us out. Whenever there is a difficulty, we think we are out, we take that attitude. We believe we are out. But no: abide in Him. 'Lord, I refuse to take any other position. My position is in Thee, and I refuse to take any



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other position or to regard myself as not in Thee'. Temptation may come, distress, sufferings, trials may come, and we may feel acutely that we are out. Our first thought is that if we knew Christ we should not be in this way, and therefore, judging by this feeling, we are out. So we pray 'Lord, put me in Christ'. We find we cannot get in—and that is the difficulty with many. Whenever there is a temptation, whenever there is a feeling which we ought not to have, then we go by that feeling and believe we are already out, and then we treat ourselves as if we were out.

The word 'abide' ought to come in there. Here is a temptation, a trial, a difficulty, and you are feeling it quite acutely—but do not believe that you are out. Look up to the Lord, and say, 'Lord, I do not believe in this feeling of mine. I do not believe that I am out. I praise Thee that I am in Christ. I have been crucified, everything is new, old things have passed away. Lord, I praise Thee that that is eternal in Him, it cannot be made to be untrue at this moment. It is settled, it is history. My history was written before I was born. My history has already been formed in the experience of Christ. Nothing can alter that now. It is done, it is finished. So, Lord, I refuse to believe that I am out of Christ. I believe I am in Christ. I have been crucified, and I am living by His resurrection life'. You see, when you take a positive stand to abide, you will find other things will fall out instead of you falling out. Faith is always meeting a mountain, but either faith or the mountain will have to go. They cannot both stand, but the trouble is that many a time the mountain stays and faith goes. That must not be. Faith is always the substantiating of eternal fact, something always true. We must not believe our variable senses—that will never lead us anywhere.

#### THE FACT OF OUR ETERNAL CRUCIFIXION

What is our experience concerning the question of crucifixion, for instance? A temptation comes—say irritation, trying to get us to lose our patience. Something is going on and we are beginning to feel irritated. A temptation—and then a feeling of almost going over to that temptation. What is our reaction? Immediately our first thought is, 'I must die now, otherwise something is going to happen; I shall do something which is not honouring to the Lord, I must be quick; I must ask the Lord to put me to death, to crucify my old man'. Our first thought is to try to do something which has already been done in Christ. That is not abiding, it is treating ourselves as those who have not been crucified. Faith ought to go out to God, believing in the etern-

al fact. Instead of praying we should *praise the Lord*. 'Lord, I praise Thee. I am feeling irritated, but that has been dealt with on the Cross. I praise Thee that my old man has been crucified. It is not going to be done. It is not, that, because temptation has come, therefore I must get crucified. Whether temptation is here or not, I praise Thee that my old man has been eternally crucified. I am just as crucified as Christ was. His experience is my history. He cannot be any more crucified than I am. If He is raised, praise the Lord, I am. If Christ is ascended into heaven far above all, I am there.'

We feel the things of the world pulling us down, but the things of the world can no more pull us down than they can pull Him down. We are just as secure in the heavenlies as Christ is. By faith we hold our position. Instead of going down, we must believe we are up. If we believe that His experience is our history at this moment, the Lord is responsible to make it true. The Holy Spirit is here to prove that what God has done in Christ is still true, if we dare to venture our faith.

Do not look at Christ as something to be aimed at. Look at Christ as something God has given you. The whole thing is not just a make-believe. There are some yellow flowers on my desk. It is not that I just come into the room, and say, 'There must be some yellow flowers here, there must be some yellow flowers here', and by auto-suggestion the yellow flowers come into being! No, I open my eyes and look. Whether I see them or not, the flowers are here. I see them, they are here; I do not see them—they are still here. It is a fact whether you experience it or not. Our faith is no make-believe. Our faith is based on eternal facts, on the facts of Christ and what He has done. So may the Lord open our eyes when we look at Him and see what is in Him; and, substantiating, we shall find the substance. It is a real substance; nothing misty or foggy about it. Some of us have proved the facts of Christ. We believe what we see, we know what He means. We stand to give you a testimony that it is not ourselves; it is not that we could get any experience. The whole thing is seeing Him. All the experience any Christian can have is by seeing the Lord.

So there are the two sides. On the one hand, we must see our position in Christ, and what God has done in Him, and that the history of Christ is our history. The other side is that, as I walk on the earth, I have spiritual needs. I need graces, virtues. Divine things to go on. Christ has been made by God to be to me those very things.

May there be faith, the kind of faith which sees the facts. May there be faith, the kind which *trusts* as to those facts. Two sides of faith—the seeing

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side, which brings everything that is true of Christ to be true to me to-day ; the trusting side, making Him to be the very thing I need at this very

moment. May the Lord lead us to see that He is our experience, our very history.

(Concluded)

W. N.

## FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

## READY FOR THE KING

MANY of those who use the Waterloo Bridge over the Thames in London may not remember the old one which stood there for so many years. Some time before the end, the bridge had seemed unable to bear the strain of much heavy traffic, so it was made stronger by means of great lengths of timber which were added to its supports. The trees used were elms ; they give strong and useful wood, but one which is mostly used for rough jobs rather than for any fine work. Well, the job was rough enough, but at least the elms had the consolation of being really useful. Nobody saw them, and few people knew of the good work which they were doing, but they kept the old bridge steady, and made it possible for the traffic to pass safely over the river.

When the bridge was pulled down to make room for the new one, they were still there, and their timber was still in good condition. They were removed, taken with the rest of the scrap from the bridge, and put up for sale. They were treated more or less as salvage. The time spent in the slime and water did not spoil the trees, but it turned them a strange grey colour, which was quite unusual. Nobody thought them to be of much value. Elm is not a special wood at any time, and in this case it seemed likely that their best days were over. The only thing for them to do was to hope for a very humble place in the world, and to be thankful for even that. But although no one could have guessed it, there was yet a very great honour in store for the elm trees.

Preparations were then being made for the coronation of King George VI. At Westminster Abbey, where the coronation was to take place, a small extension was to be built, with ornamental doors through which the king should enter. The designer of this building planned that the doors should be of wood, with fine carvings on them. He wanted, however, to avoid using paint of any kind, so he made up his mind that he must have some timber which would match the rest of the building, which meant that it must be of a stone grey shade.

It was no use telling him that there was no such wood. He insisted that he must have it. Search was made, but all in vain. The fine and costly woods which they brought him were all rejected. However beautiful and valuable they were, they were not

what he wanted. He must have a special grey wood for the doors through which the king might pass. It was an essential part of his plans. And so the search went on.

At last the right kind of wood was found. It was just the shade which the artist desired. People enquired what strange wood was this ; it had such an unusual colour ; it had never been seen before. When someone replied that it was elm, this seemed an absurd answer. Who ever had seen elm wood like that? But it was elm. Not the common wood which the timber merchants and carpenters know, but the special elm which had been helping to hold up the old Waterloo Bridge.

One might almost have thought that the elms had been specially prepared for this great event. Their hidden years of faithful service under the Thames had been far from wasted. They had served well, but that was not all. They had been so changed during their service that now they were ready for the crowning day. All unknown to the world, and even to themselves, those years of trial had been making them fit for the highest honour. The strange grey colour which they had turned, was the very shade which the designer had been seeking.

So when the great day of the coronation arrived, and the king drove to the Abbey to be crowned, there were the handsome carved doors, waiting to welcome him. They swung nobly on their hinges, as if proud to have such an important task on that solemn and glorious day. Yet they had only been common elm trees, and would never have been thought of for the doors if it had not been for the years of hidden service under the bridge. It had often been a trying time. If trees had feelings, like humans, it would often have been a sad time. But it was a worthwhile time, for it had fitted them for their post of honour at the Abbey. No doubt the king admired the fine doors. Certainly they were admired by large numbers of visitors and sight-seers, whose wonder was all the greater when they heard the story of how the elm wood came to be chosen for the royal doors.

It is not hard to find a text which will fit this story. "That the proof of your faith . . . might be found unto praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 1. 7). A crowning

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day is coming, far greater than any earthly coronation. The Lord Jesus will return to take up His power and reign in His kingdom. I am sure that we all want to have a share in that glory, and to be of special service to Him in that Day. The elm trees show us how we may be made ready for the King.

They seem to tell us never to mind how humble or hidden is our service to Him. If we are faith-

ful and stand the test, living our lives with the one end of being true to our Lord, when the work and tests of life are over we shall not be put on the scrap-heap. We shall find, perhaps to our surprise, that all the time a change has been going on inside us; a change which will fit us to be unto His praise and honour when, as our King, He returns in glory.  
H. F.

### THREE FEASTS OF REMEMBRANCE

*"Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, of the seed of David, according to my gospel" (II Timothy ii. 8).*

*Reading: Exodus xxiii. 14-17; xii. 16.*

YOU notice that here are three feasts of remembrance that the Lord said were to be kept every year. Here are set forth, evidently, three great matters that were to be perpetually remembered by the Lord's people, never to be forgotten; year by year they were to be kept in view. So that we might suppose that, in some sort of way, there might be gathered up in these three feasts the whole range of redemption, of salvation. Whatever else might be forgotten of detail, these three great vital notes must be ever borne in mind.

The first is the feast of unleavened bread; the second the feast of harvest, or first-fruits, the third the feast of ingathering. These, spiritually interpreted, have a sequence. I would like to say this preliminary word about them. The Lord always leads us in an experimental way in our discovery of His mind. We can go to our Bible and read something like this and say, These three feasts mean so-and-so; these are three points I must remember! Do not let us deceive ourselves into thinking that, if we remember them, we are in the good of them. The Lord will teach us those three things in an experimental way. He will bring us to the first one by real experience; then, having got us to the first one in real experience, He will cause that to lead us to the next one experimentally; and when we have come to the next one in experience, we shall see the third one yonder as again a matter into which we are led.

#### THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

The first, then, is the feast of unleavened bread. The two principal points in the feast of unleavened bread were, firstly, the fact that they were to eat unleavened bread, and secondly, that, on the first and the last days, that is as it were bridging the whole period of seven days, no manner of work

was to be done by any man. Let us consider those two things: no manner of work to be done—that as bridging the whole period—and then no leavened bread to be eaten. You know that leaven always represents in the Word that which is a corrupt element, and unleavened bread always represents that which is not corrupt, not defiled, and always speaks of the Lord Jesus Himself, His flesh, His humanity.

Now here is the first great thing the Lord sets down: this must ever be remembered in Israel in connection with their redemption from Egypt—*no manner of work*. If you will read the redemption from Egypt, you will see how many elements come in there which stress the fact that it was the Lord who brought them out of Egypt with a strong hand, not themselves. Now, is not the course of our education just exactly touched here? What is it that the Lord is doing as a main or primary thing with you and with me? I have no sort of doubt it is this—and not only in the beginnings of our Christian life, but like a cycle ever returning, a lesson which in a sense is a primary lesson always to be freshly taught—that *you cannot redeem yourself from any kind of bondage!* No manner of work of yours or mine will ever get us out of any form of captivity.

We say, Oh, we know that, salvation is of the Lord! I think the answer is that we do not know it experimentally. We shall never know it experimentally until we are delivered from this flesh altogether and are with the Lord, because—and here is the next point—that inability of ours to effect any kind of salvation is bound up with the fact that we have a corrupt life in us, we are corrupt people, and therefore—and does not our experience tell us this?—therefore we can never deliver ourselves. With all the efforts that we make to get out of our own problems, we always find that we come to stalemate. We cannot save ourselves because there is that within us which is a corrupt factor. If only we could get rid of that we might do something, but we cannot, and so we are forced by experience to this necessity: I need a life that is not corrupt, that is not weak because of



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sin, that is not at enmity with God: if I had such a life I would be free, but I have not! That is exactly the point—no manner of human work because leaven is always mixed up with the energies of the flesh.

So, in the feast of unleavened bread, the Lord is saying that redemption is on this ground—no work of yours, and the energies of an unleavened life, which is the life of the Lord Himself, not your life! That is the first great principle to be ever borne in mind in the whole course of our Christian career; and never let us say we know it—we do not know it finally and fully. There are depths to which the Lord is ever bringing us experimentally, and that depth is generally accompanied by some real sense of despair; but do not be afraid of a sense of despair, for it is always the prelude to deliverance. When the Lord has really brought you to that sense of despair so that your cry is, 'I cannot—I need another, uncorrupt, Holy One to deliver me', then you are on with the next feast.

## THE FEAST OF FIRST-FRUITS

What is the feast of first-fruits, if it is not Christ risen from the dead? The Lord says, 'Remember that note as the next one—"Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, of the seed of David"'. You find that your way of escape is in Christ as risen. I think we have got to be brought more and more to the place of glorying in Christ. That is just the simple fact—glorying in Christ. He is risen: He is the unleavened One: He is Victor over sin, over the corrupt elements in me, over the bondage that holds me down; Victor over all the power of the enemy. Oh, the Lord says, 'Keep this feast, never forget this point—Jesus Christ the Risen One'. In the Deuteronomy account of this whole story, when it speaks of this feast of first-fruits, the word is, 'Be joyful!' (Deut. xvi. 15). I wish I had a heart and a tongue that could just pour out something adequate, when speaking of the Lord Jesus as the Risen One, there at the right hand of the Majesty on high for us who need a Redeemer, who need a Deliverer, who need a Saviour.

Now, the process whereby His salvation and His delivering power become operative in the life is by glorying in Him. That is the process whereby it happens. It never happens by my sitting down and saying, 'Well, I am in a difficulty, but I know Jesus is risen from the dead, so I suppose He will get me out of this!' It comes about when, in sheer despair of one's own ability, suddenly the Lord seems to come to you and, as though you had never heard it before, He says, "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead". You look up,

as they did when they went to the tomb saying, 'Who shall roll away the stone?'—and found it already rolled away. Oh, the deliverance! Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead! Have you been forgetting that? That is your way out. Oh, begin to remember, begin to glory in that, begin to tell Him that you count on Him as the Risen One. It is marvellous how it works. That is the process of emancipation—that is believing in the resurrection, glorying in Christ Jesus. Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead.

In connection with this same feast of first-fruits, you will know that it was in two parts. There was the first-fruit offering which speaks of Christ, and then fifty days later was the feast of weeks or Pentecost. There you have the truth of first-fruits but now as relating to the Church risen with Him: a people in whom all the values of His personal resurrection are involved; all that He means, as risen there at His Father's right hand, now planted in a people. This is the thing to remember. He is not only there for Himself as Himself. The whole principle of first-fruits in the sight of God involves a people partaking with Him of His enthroned power and glory. He is not only there *for* you, in an objective sort of way, but He is there *as* you, to bring you through. Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead.

Well, when you get there, to that second place, then you are glorying in Christ, and you say, 'Well, then, my problem may be solved! Hallelujah!' Yes, but what a state everything is in! I have got out of my personal problem; but look at the world to-day, look at what is happening—what about all that?

## THE FEAST OF INGATHERING

There is the feast of ingathering coming on now. Because He has risen from the dead as the first-fruits, the whole harvest of the will of God is secured in Him. Everything—the subjection of the whole creation to Christ—is guaranteed by His being there. The will of God and the purpose of God are guaranteed by the fact that He is there. It is not a question of what He *will do* to deal with the evil in the world; He *has done* it all. The man who really sees the meaning of Christ as in heaven is the man who knows that the ultimate harvest of a creation entirely subject to God is secured. This deals with that side of things which I suppose, in its greatest sense, is very largely future. This brings in Deuteronomy xvi again—"thou shalt rejoice" (verse 11). It brings, to the one who knows this experimentally, the rejoicing note. Whatever things are like now in the world, it is all right: in

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the Person of Christ the ultimate settlement of all these matters is secured; the ultimate harvest is promised, is held, is gained in Christ. It is not a case of wondering how things are going to wind up. While, as men and women, we view all that is happening with deep concern and human sympathy: we are not trite and easy-going about it; we see it all in its sorrow and its agony: yet the man of God keeps this feast continually. In Christ all the problems of the earth are settled, in Christ all enemies are subjected, in Christ sin is destroyed, death is overcome, and the day is ahead when He shall subject all things unto Himself. That is future, but the man of God is ever living in the blessed assurance of that. And so, though it be future, the Lord says, 'Keep that feast now; continually remember that; continually rejoice in that. Every year, you Israelites, keep that feast'. Yes, even though Israel be carried away into Babylon, they might still keep the feast. Our ultimate full restoration and recovery and glory is secured for us!

You see the three feasts, the three stages, but they are very practical. These are not just theoretical things. Let me remind you of what happened at the capture of Jericho. You get these three feasts, it seems to me, embodied there. Here is a great big obstacle, a stronghold of Satan, which the people of God were to take, and instead of fighting for it with their own energy, the Lord says, Walk round it!—a testimony to the fact that they can do nothing, "no manner of work". But then there is the ark, and there were the priests blowing with the trumpets as they went round, and if those trumpet notes were saying anything, surely they were saying, "Remember Jesus Christ risen from the dead! Remember Jesus Christ risen from the dead!" That was going out like a mighty challenge against those men in Jericho. What was the impact on their hearts? We know from Rahab herself that, before ever the children of Israel arrived at Jericho's walls, the heart of the people was melted for fear. What must have been their reaction when they saw that host marching round, with the ark, before which the waters of the Jordan had been divided, in their midst, with the mysterious silence upon the people and only this trumpet note ringing out from the priests—the trumpet note that must have been, 'Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead'!

What about the thoughts of Israel as they marched round? What were their thoughts? Why, they were thinking this: 'Jericho is as good as captured! The Lord has told us that when we hear the sound of the trumpet, we are to shout, and the wall of the city shall fall down flat!' What

we need to-day is this consciousness: that, in virtue of Christ, as we boast in Him, as we know our union with Him, Jericho is as good as fallen; the end is certain. Do apply that to present world conditions. I have been convicted in my own heart of allowing the world prospect to get a bit on top of me and to take away the note of restful, praiseful assurance in the Lord. You look out and see a world becoming flooded with evil, and you say, 'It is awful—what is going to happen?' Of course, from the angle of human suffering, no words are adequate to describe the terrible nature of it all, and we should be worthy of the greatest condemnation if our hearts did not flow out in compassion, sympathy and sorrow, even though the flood did not overflow us personally. But when we look out at it in the light of Jesus Christ risen from the dead, what is our outlook? It is simply this, that all those powers on earth and in the heavens are subject to Him, and He doeth what He will in the kingdom of men, and the heavens are ruling, and if floods of evil men are overflowing the whole earth, He is there still administering the will and purpose of God. Things have not gone all wrong from His standpoint. There may yet be continents overflowed by the wickedness of the times, but it will not mean that He has lost control. The thing is secured because He is there; He has all things in His hands.

Then what manner of men ought we to be who keep these feasts, who remember Him, the Risen One? We ought not to have on our brow the mark of care and anxiety that other men carry—I mean we should have no anxiety as to the ultimate issue. Let us more than any others have a heart of compassion and sympathy, tender feeling for the needy. Our hearts ought to be stayed upon the fact—He being there, and we keeping the feast of first-fruits on the ground of unleavened bread—that neither we nor any other man, good or bad, can do anything about the purpose of God as of himself, either to secure it or to hinder it. Everything being in Him, the end is secure, and the peace of God may well garrison our hearts. That should be our outlook upon the world situation as it is.

And a similar outlook should be ours upon the whole question of the work of God. In these days we say, 'What a terrible need! If only England would awake to repentance; if only the Church of God would awake to her responsibility, the opportunity of the days! Oh, if only something could be done!' We have cried until we have had no voice to cry that God would raise up a prophetic ministry, that He would shake the thing that is a counterfeit of His real thought. We see

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nothing much happening; we say we must do something about it. Do remember the feast of unleavened bread. Man can do *nothing* about it. Only that uncorrupt, perfect One, who is the unleavened One, can touch this situation. We will not fret because we cannot do something about it. We will remember Him at the right hand of the Majesty on high, the Risen One, and we will say: 'All power has been given to Him: He can and He will do what is necessary about the whole situation! He will do it when He sees the time is ripe. He will not act prematurely, neither will He act indifferently, with a plan that will not fulfil the thing in view. He will act in due season, in such manner as He sees to be right, and when He acts it will be, as it were, majestically, to gather in the full and final harvest for Himself; and evil shall be cast down, and that which is for His glory shall be gathered out, and there shall presently be an earth "filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea".' We can trust Him, the Enthroned One, about the world situation; we can trust Him, the Enthroned One, about the word of God, Beloved, you can trust Him, as the Enthroned One, about your problem.

But remember, keep the feasts. The first one is unleavened bread. You cannot do it. When you have learned to the point of despair that you cannot do it, then He will open your eyes to a new beholding of the Risen One, and He will say, "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead". He will do it, and when you see Him your heart will leap to the third, the ingathering. Because He has taken it in hand, the end is secure. So we shall be a people not carrying about an anxious countenance, sharing with the men of the world their hopeless outlook, but we shall be those upon whose faces shall reign the peace of God and in whose hearts shall be the joy of leaving it to Him and knowing that He will do a perfect work.

I hope there is nothing in what I have said which seems to minimise the necessity for living, vigorous faith. That is what I am pleading for—a faith that co-operates with Him. That is the Pentecost side of the first-fruit offering: a people indwelt by His life, a people moved by the energies that are His, a people working together with Him by His Spirit. Such a people may rest in the day of trouble and know that in the Lord Jesus the end is settled and secure.

G. P.

## THE GOD THAT DOEST WONDERS

*"Thou art the God that doest wonders" (Ps. lxxvii. 14).*

*"Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things" (Ps. lxxii. 18).*

*"Abraham . . . under utterly hopeless circumstances hopefully believed" (Rom. iv. 18—Weymouth).*

"THOU art the God that doest wonders." First of all, we have the statement that our God is the God of wonders. "Who doest wonders." The other Psalmist goes further—"Who only doeth wondrous things". One of the things that you and I have to learn in our relationship to the Lord is that, when we come into a living relationship with Him, we have come into the realm of infinite possibility. We have been placed upon a basis and set in a realm that is altogether above the realm with which we are familiar. We have been taken out of that realm, and put into another where the possibilities are just infinite and where the word 'impossible' does not have a place. That is a thing basic to our relationship with God. We have come into the realm of infinite wisdom, which has no problems whatsoever in respect of questions—mental questions, intellectual questions; and into the realm of infinite power, which has no prob-

lems in the matter of doing things; and it is a part of the education of a child of God that that is the realm into which such a child has been born. Our whole education, viewed from one standpoint, is to discover that we have come into another realm where we may never close down with man's wisdom or man's power and say, 'Well, we have come to the end of all understanding, all knowledge, all wisdom, all strength, and so that is an end of it'. We are never allowed in our new realm to close down like that. The word of the Lord is very definite about this—that the Lord begins His wisdom in a very simple way just where man has reached the very highest and fullest development of his.

That is a great statement in I Corinthians ii, where the Apostle is speaking about the wisdom of this world and the rulers of this world. He is recognising this world's wisdom. He was writing to Corinthians, and Corinth was a great city in a country where wisdom was the object of worship—wisdom and power embodied in man. In Greece wisdom and power were brought to their fullest development. The philosophers were there; they were there in strength; and they were out for one object—to answer every question and problem relative to man's life, his origin, his destiny, and



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everything to do with him, and they had developed their philosophy, their wisdom, their love of knowledge to a very great degree. Then the Apostle says that this world, in its wisdom developed to the full, did the most foolish thing that creation has ever done—it killed the Lord of glory; and finally he points out that, just where man's wisdom reached its highest development, its greatest magnitude, God commenced in a very simple way with His wisdom and made all that wisdom very foolish. "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?" (I Cor. i. 20). God begins where man exhausts his resources of wisdom.

It is the same as to power—man's power, developed immensely to solve problems, the problems of the universe and human life. But man's power is exhausted and the problem is not solved. And then God begins in a very simple way and does it: showing that, between the fullest development of this world and of man's life in wisdom and power, and the very beginnings of this other Kingdom, there is a great gulf fixed, and that the very foolishness of God is greater than the fullest wisdom of man, and the very weakness of God infinitely transcends the greatest power of man.

#### EDUCATION IN THE REALM OF INFINITE POSSIBILITY

This has many practical bearings, and I have specially in mind the younger folk who have to meet the world. Some of us have to meet it, and we know what we come up against in these matters in this world, and the peril of surrendering to this world in the matter of its wisdom and its idea of strength. If we do surrender, we have surrendered the Kingdom of God, we have abandoned the Kingdom of God, and we have lost the immense inheritance of being related to God—in the sense that being related, livingly related, to God brings us into the realm of infinite possibilities to which this world cannot attain. I was saying that God makes this our education, and we are learning this all the way along. Again and again and again in our lives, the Lord allows a situation to arise where that is the end—there is nothing more possible: you have exhausted all the avenues of enquiry, you have pulled all the wires that can be pulled, you have gone to all authorities, you have done everything. No, it is a closed door, it cannot be. And then the Lord just does it! At the last moment it is done in such a simple way. Here is a simple instance. On a certain day the answer of the railway companies is that it is impossible for you to have a sleeper—you will be lucky if you get on the train at all. 'What do you say about it, Lord?' That is their verdict, and they repeat it almost up

to the last minute. Then you get not only a sleeper but a first-class sleeper!—and that happens repeatedly in different ways all through the days.

That is the education of our life. You get to the end of what is possible, the world has nothing to offer you, and the Lord does it in a simple way, with no trouble at all. He hardly has to speak, and there it is, and it is so simple. It works out in big ways as well as little. The education of our life under the hand of God is to know we have come into another realm where we need not close down at all with human possibility. God is other than that; He has everything in His hands. He can snap His fingers and every barred door can open. It works in so many ways.

You come up against the intellectual side of things in this world—intellectual problems, problems of science and philosophy—and you will be tempted to say that all the big brains are on one side: the scientists in the mass take this view and you cannot ignore it; you have to recognise that those who take the Bible view are in the minority. That is only saying in another way that Christians are fewer than unbelievers.

Take such a question as the biological question, evolution. Well, you say, all the scientists are on one side over that. Not admitting that, but admitting that the majority probably are, is that to be the end of such a matter? The world's wisdom brought to its highest point of development, and taking a view which is directly contrary to what the Bible says—are we to close down with that? Is it not strange how, again and again, God has slipped in with some very simple thing, and capsize a whole position that had been built up for centuries and established as final, and the whole structure has collapsed just with the Lord slipping in some little thing.

Take certain views about things in the Old Testament—well, generations of investigators spent their years upon that, and came to a conclusion, a final conclusion, which denied the truth of the Bible statements. It was not historical, it was not scientific, it was not true, so the Bible is not to be relied upon in that; science has proved it! One day a man, using a spade away in a foreign country, as he dug, turned up some old bits of broken crockery, with some writing on them, and when they were pieced together, it was found that it was actually contemporary evidence of the very thing that was in the Bible. God only used a workman's spade to turn up evidence that capsize generations of finally settled conclusions about the Bible. The whole thing had to be abandoned. But the scientists do not give it up. They go on to prove something else. In the long run, God is going to

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prove in very simple ways that all the wisdom of this world will not last long. Men will think that they have established the matter, and then a little thing will happen and the whole view will have to be abandoned.

And something will happen one day about the evolutionary idea. It will be clever—so simple and clever—and the whole thing will be exploded. We come into another realm when we touch infinite wisdom, and the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God, especially when it sets itself against God over this matter of the development of man. What are we going to say about it? 'He has been coming up the scale all the time!?' Has he? In recent years he has become so clever that he has had to burrow into the earth to hide himself from his own cleverness and save his very life. What is the job of all our medical men? Are they really at work upon the evolutionary business of reaching a great end, the superman, or are they on the job of patching up a broken-down man? Is all medical science an evolutionary process toward something perfect, or is it patching up a thing that is breaking down all the time? I think it is the latter. It is trying to keep from collapse something whose whole tendency is towards collapse. The medical profession has its hands full in trying to keep this thing from collapsing. And so we could go on; that is a very wide field.

What I am trying to say is this, that we have come into a realm which is above this present realm. Our God is the God of wonders, and that means that the background of wonder must of necessity be the end of human wisdom and human strength, or it is not wonder. You never wonder when you say, That is easy, I could do that, anybody could do that! But if you put all others out of court and all their wisdom and strength has been exhausted and the thing is hopeless, and then it is done, you wonder. The background of real wonder is the end of human resource.

The education of the people of God is along that very line of necessity to know the kind of God that is our God. We shall have to be, right to the end, brought more and more to an end of human resource, for every new bit of living knowledge of the Lord will spring out of a deadlock—the deadlock of human understanding and ability; every rising higher in the scale of spiritual life will be by a fresh crisis of human impossibility. Until the end the child of God will go repeatedly into a position where, with all that they have known and all that they have seen, the new situation is a perfectly hopeless one: they are as blind as anybody could be. "Who is blind, but my servant?" (Isa. xlii, 19). It means that from time

to time we shall be in black darkness as to what the way is, as to the way out or the way through, as to what is going to happen, what the Lord is going to do, the issue of things; as blind as we can be, seeing nothing, and in helpless weakness, unable to bring anything about or to do anything; simply paralysed by the situation. So far as the situation is concerned, it will be a perfectly hopeless situation. If we close down with the situation as it is, we shall close down altogether and say, That is the end! But this is the course of education in the knowledge of the Lord, if we will accept it—that the Lord will bring us to positions where we say, There is no solution to this problem unless the Lord gives it. That is the normal Christian life! Take Abraham as a specimen of education: for that is what he is—spiritual education. Well, Abraham was one who "in *utterly hopeless circumstances* hopefully believed"; and God did it. He hopefully believed that he might become the father of many nations, and it happened, in utterly hopeless circumstances.

You see, the background must be like that if there is to be something 'wonder-ful', or, in other words, if we are to know what kind of Lord we have, and those who will go most utterly with the Lord will know this hopelessness of situations more than others. Some people are not prepared to go with the Lord unless He is all the time treating them as little children, explaining everything to them, answering all their questions. He may come down to that childish level and answer those questions, for it is like children to ask questions. But the Lord's way of educating is not to answer like that. When we get to a certain stage of maturity, the Lord does not just come and say, 'I am going to do this, and I will tell you why; I want you to pass this way, and I will tell you exactly why: you need not worry at all, I will be with you right through and you will come out the other end all right'. When we get on, we find ourselves plunged into situations altogether beyond us, beyond our resource, and the Lord seems to be hiding Himself and standing back and having no interest in it. We are brought to the position—This requires a miracle, this requires a wonder, this requires someone altogether outside our realm of resource: and we go on quietly, and the Lord does not crash in and deal with the thing in some amazing way. It just happens, and we find that we come through so simply that we wonder if there ever was a serious crisis at all. All the wonders that the Lord did in the past no longer remained with us as wonders in our consciousness when that new situation arose. We have known the Lord to do things which resolved the greatest problems:

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but to-day, with a greater problem, that does not stand us in very much stead. We lose the strength of all those past experiences; we have to have something new. The Lord does not want His people to live upon the past. He wants them to have ever present living knowledge of Himself, so there must be new difficulties that call for new interventions. That is the background of knowing the Lord progressively.

#### WONDERS NEVER GIVEN TO UNBELIEF

But then there is another thing. This kind of knowledge of the Lord is reserved for people of faith. There are two things which the Lord will not do. Firstly, He will not do His wonders to destroy unbelief. He has done wonders before those who were not believers, but never before those who were positive unbelievers. There is something between being a non-believer and a positive unbeliever. There is a whole world of people who would believe, and the Lord does wonders before them and He helps them that way. But bring the Lord up against a man or woman who is a positive unbeliever, and the Lord will not do anything to destroy that unbelief; He never does. So if in us there is some unbelief, the Lord is not going to do anything wonderful to destroy that unbelief. The very minimum that He will ask is, "Believest thou that I am able?" and our response will have to be, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mark ix, 24). 'I believe you are able to do this'. When a man says, "If the Lord should make windows in heaven, might this thing be?" (II Kings vii. 2, 19), that man is doomed; he does not come into the thing the Lord does. You remember the story. It happens, and he is out of it. The Lord's wonders are reserved for the people of faith.

#### WONDERS NEVER GIVEN TO SELFISH ENDS

There is another thing that the Lord will not do. He will never do His wonders for our pleasure and satisfaction. The Lord does not lend Himself to us to be used by us. There is a great tendency that we should be constantly going to the Lord to ask Him to do things for us to get us out of our difficulties because we want to get through—we want the result of the Lord's help for ourselves. The Lord does not do that. The Lord will work His wonders when our lives are in line with His purpose and our hearts are bound up with His interests, and in that way He often tests us to find out whether it is ourselves or His interests and

glory that we have at heart. Sometimes He does not seem to be coming in, and the test searches us in this way: 'Are you in this? Do you want this for yourself? If you get it, what will it mean as to your life with Him? Is it really going to be to your spiritual strengthening, or are you just going to be happy you got through?' Now you go on, and when you get into difficulty again you will come to the Lord and ask for further help; but it does not work out to the strengthening of your life with the Lord. So the Lord does not do His wonders for us, for our gratification. He will do it in relation to His own purpose and interest, and when we are bound up with those, we are in the way of the Lord working His wonders. That is very simple, but let us remember it lest we be found just trying to use the Lord and only coming to Him when we are in desperation and there is no real relationship to His own glory.

Well, He is 'the God who doeth wonders'. That is the realm into which we are brought; relationship to another order. Wonders require a background of "utterly hopeless circumstances". That requires a new knowledge of the Lord, and the wonders of the Lord are never given to unbelief and never given to selfish ends. They are for the Lord's ends, the Lord's purposes. This is our God; this is our Lord; this is our heritage in Christ.

T. A-S.

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#### CONFERENCES IN VIEW

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Honor Oak (London)

August

SATURDAY, August 1st, 3.30 &amp; 6.30 p.m.

LORD'S DAY, August 2nd, 11 a.m., 3.30 &amp; 6.30 p.m.

MONDAY, August 3rd, 11 a.m., 3.30 &amp; 6.30 p.m.

October, 3rd to 5th inclusive.

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 Kilcreggan, Scotland.

July 17th to 25th.

August 7th to 15th.

August 21st to 29th (Young People).

*It is possible that a further conference will be arranged at Kilcreggan early in September.*

*Please apply for accommodation early, as we get heavy demands.*



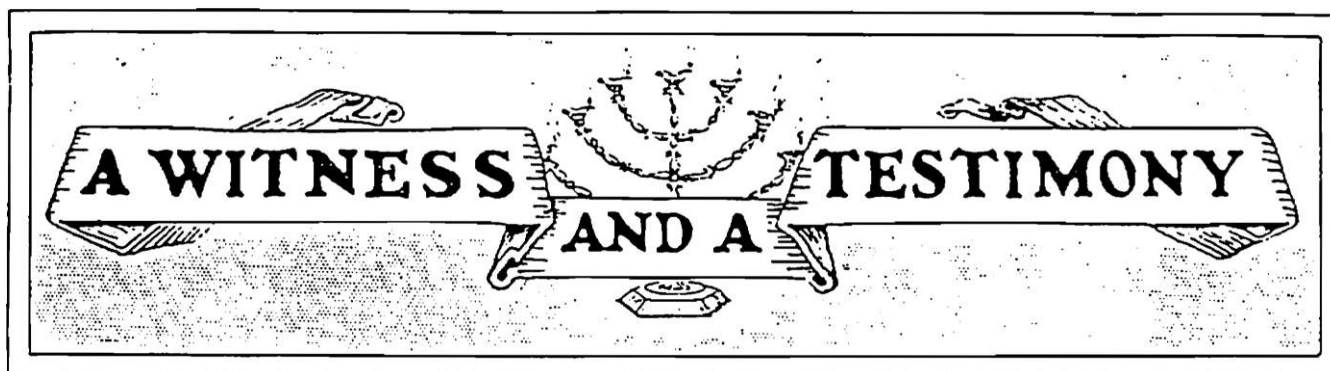
## THIS MINISTRY

**T**HE OBJECT OF THE MINISTRY of this little paper, issued bi-monthly, is to contribute to the Divine end which is presented in the words of Ephesians iv. 13 — "... till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge (lit. full knowledge) of the Son of God, unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we be no longer children ..."

It is not connected with any "Movement", "Organization", "Mission" or separate body of Christians, but is just a ministry to "all saints". Its going forth is with the prayer and hope that it will so result in a fuller measure of Christ, a richer and higher level of spiritual life, that, while bringing the Church of God into a growing approximation to His revealed will as to its 'attainment' it may be better qualified to be used of Him in testimony in the nations, and to the completing of its own number by the salvation of those yet to be added by the Lord.

This ministry is maintained by the Lord through the stewardship of those who value it. There is no "subscription", but **gifts** can be sent to the Editor, "A Witness and A Testimony", 13, Honor Oak Road, Forest Hill, London, S.E. 23, England. All cheques should be made payable to 'Witness and Testimony A/c'. The paper is sent only to those who personally desire it, and we count on friends to advise us if this is no longer the case, or if they change their address.

"Personal" letters should be addressed to Mr. T. AUSTIN-SPARKS.



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## EDITORIAL

Beloved of God.

From time to time we feel it to be helpful to our readers if we try to put into some concrete statement something relating to this ministry.

Very many write us of its value and helpfulness, and we are glad that its true object and purpose is discerned by so large a number. Even so, we are continually concerned to bring it to clear and definite issues. This is because this ministry is so very practical in its background, and we are anxious that this fact should be kept in view. These are not just ideas and teachings that are expounded, but the issues of a life in the school of deep and, often, painful experience. It is the result of something being done and then explained.

Note the order. In the old dispensation, God first showed a pattern and then commanded that all should be made accordingly. In this dispensation, He began with mighty acts, the acts of the Cross, Resurrection and Exaltation of Christ, and the sending of the Holy Spirit: but these were not wholly understood even by those chiefly involved, and their meaning had to be arrived at by way of progress and crises. This ministry is so much of that character. The Lord has done and continues to do things in us and with us, and then teaches us their meaning. We are still learning: hence there is always room for adjustment, and need for teachableness.

To sum up this work and teaching of the Lord, it just amounts to this. There has taken place an undercutting of the whole of Christianity, as it is known now, in its crystallization into a set, established, and accepted system, with all its institutionalism, traditionalism, etc., and a bringing right back and down to the spiritual and essential significance and implications of Jesus the Lord. So very much of that which goes by His Name is now so much separated from His Person. Not historically, of course, for it all relates to Him as the historic Jesus: but vitally, spiritually, organically, and immediately. The 'Gospel' has suffered this severance. It is now so largely 'salvation' as a matter of forgiveness, justification, peace, happiness, heaven, and escape from hell.

These are truly the blessings of the Gospel, but at the beginning it was Christ who was preached: the Person who was kept in full view: the one through whom the Gospel came. It was "the gospel of God concerning his Son". The emphasis was not upon what men could have, but upon God's rights and Christ's glory. This may seem to be straining things, but let it be understood that the Holy Spirit—the Custodian of Christ's honour—is most jealous on this matter, and will only commit Himself to this keeping of Christ in view.

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

There is everywhere to-day an immense amount of definite or tacit admission of the failure of Christianity; the asking of the question: "What is wrong with Christianity or the "churches"?" The would-be doctors seeking to diagnose the malady and prescribe the remedy are a growing multitude. Not all are mistaken, and if we seem to have joined their ranks, we do not think that we are speculating when we assert that that which is preached and taught has become—although largely unwittingly—detached from the *personal* significance of Christ Himself. The business of the Church and its ministry is not to propagate a system of Christian truth, but to bring Christ Himself, in the power of the Holy Spirit, wherever it goes and is. The Gospel as such saves nobody. Salvation is a vital personal contact and union with Christ Himself. Hence, and this is the crucial point, Christ must have a living organism in which and by which to make that contact and that union.

Christianity has become something almost entirely apart from the Person of Christ. It is a religion, a system, a philosophy of life, a set of ways, practices, and ideas. It is something that people enter into, take up, join, and choose. They come to Christ through the Christian system, but the Christ they come to is a denominational, sectarian, ritualistic, or evangelical Christ. The Christ that they know and believe in is the Christ of this or that connection and interpretation. Christ rarely now creates Christianity; it is Christianity that creates Christ.

The Church—that is, what is termed the Church—is now an institution. It has become the Church of historical production, of accidental or human production. It is a hierarchy of ecclesiastical, social, human, and arbitrary selection, direction, and government. As we know it, it is not "one body and one Spirit". The terminology of Christ as Head of the Church, and the Church as the Body of Christ, is employed, but it is all objective, and so largely in the realm of Divine Sovereignty: it is fatalistic in effect, rather than immediate, subjective, and essentially personal in the presence and authority of the Holy Spirit.

All this, which represents a vast amount more, indicates the loss of one inclusive and pre-eminently essential reality. That is an inward revelation of Christ as the embodiment of an altogether other order of creation; of a constitution which is according to a Kingdom that is *not* after this world, either as a whole or in any part.

Christ just *cannot* be conformed to anything here, national or denominational. "The world knew him not." He is, to the natural man—who *may* be a Christian—inscrutable, inexplicable, and unintelligible. His power and influence cannot be attributed to any of those things looked for by the world as explanations; e.g. birth, education, personal abilities either in constitution, acquirement, or attainment. He positively repudiated all such attempts to explain His works and teachings, and to answer men's question, "Whence hath this man this . . . ?"

What Christ did and said came, so He declared, not out from Himself, but by seeing the Father. What we do and say must be by seeing the Son, and this demands, in Paul's words, a "spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him". It is the irreconcilable difference between imitation and duplication, on the one hand, and generation and reproduction, on the other.

The reproduction of the Church is not its duplication. It is a fatal mistake to try to form 'New Testament Churches'. That is the policy of sectarianism: to have churches everywhere of a pattern and technique. The Church was *born*, out from heaven, as all its members have to be, and it is just the same with churches. It is the violation of a fundamental principle to try to form churches after any pattern, and so to duplicate—even if the original was born of God and represents His mind. Every next one must be born in the same way. Everything with God takes its rise and its form from life—and that *Divine* life! In so far as we crystallize truth into a set compass, measure and limited interpretation, we make it minister death rather than life: bondage rather than liberty: letter rather than Spirit. God's way is once, and once only, to create—the prototype—and then to *generate* from that: not copy it by imitation, either mass-production or otherwise.

The Holy Spirit is in charge of this dispensation and everything has to be born of the Spirit if



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it is of God. We may have all the truth that is in the New Testament and seek to reproduce things according to it, but that is no guarantee that we shall have the living organism. We hear people speaking of 'standing for' this truth and that: meeting on the ground of such-and-such a truth: but this can only engender divisions and exclusiveness. *Christ* is the ground of meeting, and we should contend only for this ground.

It is significant that the majority of divisions, and these the most acute, have come about in directions where 'the one Body' has been the truth contended for. We can well understand that the enemy would make it his business to bring such a vital matter into dishonour and reproach: but there will always be this possibility, if truth—even the most important truth—is put in the place of the Person. Even the truth or doctrine of the Person can obscure the Person Himself. Hence even fundamentalism can be very un-Christ-like in spirit and behaviour.

All this, and so much more of its kind, represents the need for that basic and drastic work of the Cross, as an abiding power, so that what is presented is not 'Christianity', as it has come to be so largely known, but Christ, in terms of life, light, power, love, liberty, and glory. It is not this or that 'church', but Christ expressed, as present in the corporate organism—His Body.

Hence it is no particular teaching, company of Christians, 'work', or 'Fellowship' that is the object of this ministry, but only and always the Fulness of Christ.

There are many Divine principles governing such a testimony, but these are contained in the messages of this spoken and printed ministry.

When all has been said, the fundamental fact has to be borne in mind that the real seeing of Jesus is a Divine *fiat*, an act of God: the granting of a "spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him".

Perhaps more later.

THE EDITOR.

## THE ALTAR AND THE NAME

*A précis of the August Conference at Honor Oak.*

*Key Scripture: Genesis xxvi. 25. "And he builded an altar . . . and called upon the name of the Lord."*

### INTRODUCTORY.

How often these two things—the Altar and the Name—are linked together in the Bible.

For instance:—

Gen. xxii. Abraham's altar and the name Jehovah-Jireh.

The Lord the Provider for His own demands.  
God's satisfaction in sacrifice.

Exodus xvii. Moses' altar and the name Jehovah-Nissi.

The Lord triumphant in His own wars.  
God's help in warfare.

Judges vi. Gideon's altar and the name Jehovah-Shalom.

The Lord—Peace, for His own glory and testimony.

There are many more instances.

How all the above and the rest are taken up in the Cross of Christ and carried forward into the Name of the Lord.

*The inclusive and transcendent factor is the honour of the Name of the Lord, and the centre of that issue is the Cross. 2*

We take up Gideon's altar and the Name.

I. There is a tremendous work to be done.

It is no less than the extrication of the Name of the Lord from a desperate and grievous situation with His people.

The people of the Name are:—

- a. At the mercy of their enemies.  
There is a state of weakness, defeat, and impotency.

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

- b. In poverty, starvation, fear, confusion, and lack of cohesion.
- c. Without leaders who can speak with authority and unify the people unto ascendancy.

All this right in the land of promise and covenant. Christ is spiritually all that that land was typically, and yet so many of the people of His Name—Christ-ians=Christ-ones—are in a state largely corresponding to the above.

II. Gideon sets forth God's mind to do something for His Name's sake.

Gideon is an outstanding example of the kind of instrument that God would use for the honour of His Name.

The focal-point of Gideon's whole story is his altar (Judges vi. 24).

Everything moved up to it and then from it.

The altar was the climax of a battle between Gideon and the Lord.

The battle with Midian and her allies had to be pre-fought in the soul of Gideon.

God had *sovereignly* chosen an instrument.

The difficulty with Gideon was—

The greatness of the task.

The weakness of the instrument.

The problem of the people's condition—was God *really* concerned? Was this *really* the Lord? Did He *really* mean this deliverance seeing He had allowed the condition?

*Could God really be trusted?*

The fleece-tests had nothing to do with proving the *fact* of God. God never submits Himself to such tests. They had to do with God's choice of the instrument.

Moses and Jeremiah had the same problem and battle.

"I cannot speak, I am not eloquent"—*Moses*.

"I cannot speak, I am but a child"—*Jeremiah*.

God's answer was dew, not thunder and lightning. Thunder and lightning in the Bible have to do with judgment.

How often we have demanded or expected confirmation by some mighty demonstration, and God has answered like the dew—"I am just going quietly on in spite of everything".

The Lord defeated Gideon and subdued him.

The altar—"Jehovah-Shalom"—"The Lord—

Peace"—saw the ground secured for all else by peace through conquest in Gideon's own soul.

Victory or defeat rests upon our relationship with the Lord in subjection or controversy.

Gideon's faith (see Hebrews xi) was the issue of a battle of minds. "By faith (they) subdued kingdoms" because they—the instruments—were first subdued.

*The Name of the Lord has to be honoured in our own hearts before it can be vindicated on the field of battle without.*

*The enemy must have no ground within!*

III. The recovery and continuance of God's testimony to His Name.

While Gideon, on one side, sets forth the absolute sovereignty of God, on the other side he indicates the ground on which that sovereignty works.

i. Gideon was a young man.

In this he embodied a spiritual principle—the great factor and principle of *spiritual* youth.

The law of nature is ever-fresh reproduction. God having *once* created proceeds, not by more creations of each species, but by reproduction.

Every new generation is not meant to be a special creation, but the taking up of past values in freshness. The 'old' or past is kept fresh by fresh generations.

This has two sides:—

a. We who are of a passing generation will find our freshness and life in doing everything to equip the young.

If we hold things to ourselves, they will die with us; they will become old.

This is the law and blessing of families.

Childless people grow old too soon.

A mark that God means to go on is in His giving young people. This must be true spiritually as well as naturally, and more so.

b. The new generation must succeed in an inward and spiritual way to the passing.

A rigid law of the Bible is the penalty of death for dishonouring parents. Repudiate your parents and you die; that is the old law.

This contains a spiritual principle.

The new generation is not *created* a new humanity, but *generated* a *fresh expression* of the original humanity.

The values of the former have to be taken up, carried on, increased, and given new life.

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In the spiritual, years are not necessarily the criterion; spiritual life *is*. You have measure according to your walk with God.

ii. Gideon was a humble man.

Humility is a mark of true maturity. Pride so often goes with youth and inexperience—humility with age.

A proud *old* man is a shame. Humility is true spirituality. With Gideon there was no pride of person, family, achievement, or ambitiousness; no spiritual superiority. His father's house was evidently quite distinguished. Gideon took ten of his servants (Judges vi. 27). His brothers all resembled the children of a king (Judges viii. 18). Yet his spirit was one of very real meekness.

Meekness is one of the most powerful factors with God.

iii. Gideon was an industrious man.

There was not much that could be done, but he did what was possible.

God silently and—at first—imperceptibly took account of Gideon's industriousness. Gideon did not know that, while working hiddenly, he was being watched, and was producing a verdict of very great approval.

iv. Gideon had a great concern for others.

His secret activity was to secure bread for others, to defeat the food-destroying and -stealing work of the enemy. This is something of which the Lord takes account.

v. Gideon was a man of soul distress over the condition of the Lord's people. This thought and concern produced the heart-cry "Why?" (vi. 13).

vi. Gideon destroyed the enemy's foothold in his father's house.

The enemy cannot be defeated on the field if there is a private background alliance with him.

IV. The ground of the presence and power of God.

Some years ago, in a time of spiritual difficulty, I came across the following lines in *The Life of Lillas Trotter* of North Africa:—

'So many questions lie ahead concerning the work, and a great comforting came this morning in the 38th chapter of Job about "the way" of wisdom, and "the place thereof". It tells how God finds the way for the wind and the water and the lightning, and it came with a blessed power what those ways are. The way for the wind is the way of the greatest emptiness: the

place of the water is the place of the lowest depths: and the way of the lightning—as science proves—is along the line of the greatest weakness. "If any man lack." There is God's condition for the inflow of spiritual understanding.'

Gideon's story is that of the strength of weakness. The ground is the Name, and jealousy for it; but the way of the glory of the Name is the way of the Cross.

This is set forth pre-eminently in Philippians ii. 9-10.

The Name is the issue, the Cross is the way.

Here we see:—

i. The Cross means a reckoning. "He counted it not . . ." Paul here reads the motive of the Incarnation and the Cross. Another had sought to grasp the Name above every name. It was not enough to the Divine Son to sit in equality with God in heaven when the Name was usurped on earth.

Jealousy for God's rights in His Name weighed against all other interests.

Every servant of God must face this and make a reckoning, if he is *really* a servant of God.

*This is the essence of service.*

Moses "counted not": Paul said "I reckon".

We can make Christian work serve our own interests and honour. Jealousies, rivalries, factions, frictions, usually relate to personal interests.

The Lord always demands a basic reckoning, so that we will "count all things to be loss for . . . Christ Jesus" our Lord.

ii. An emptying.

Although there is such a difference both in kind and degree between Christ's emptying and ours, the principle is the same.

Emptying of all personal glory.

The whole story of Gideon is a declaration that the vessel must have no glory, but serve the glory of God.

The glory of the Name is exclusive.

There is a tremendous challenge in this statement!

In the final summing-up the weight of glory will be with those who were least in personal glory.

iii. The form and the function.

a. Man-likeness.

Not a superior being. Not an angel or archangel.



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Not a 'missionary', minister, dignitary; with titles, degrees, and worldly honours. No advertisement as someone great and important. But a *Man!*

b. Slave-function.

Not an autocrat, dictator, 'Master', 'Superior', 'Overseer', 'Superintendent', 'Manager', 'Director', etc., but a 'Bondslave'.

"I am among you as he that serveth."

iv. "Obedient".

The word "unto" contains the thought of both 'unto' and 'until'—extent and finality.

The Cross is the utterness of God's will.

Not a Commander and an issuer of orders; but obedient—taking orders; able to be told what to do, and willing to do it.

All this is gathered into the mighty

"WHEREFORE"

"Wherefore . . . the name."

The Name is the sum and crown of all that the Cross meant.

These things constitute the ground of the presence and power of God, and there is no other for glory.

V. "Called according to . . . purpose." Romans viii. 28.

Gideon was a real example of this.

i. The purpose is comprehensive and clearly defined.

It is the ultimate of all

(a.) the initial apprehending.

(b.) the progressive preparation.

ii. The purpose—because of digressions and declensions on the part of the called—demands *specific* callings to recover.

The Lord calls particular vessels to meet particular needs of any time and state.

The Bible is full of particular callings in relation to one end.

iii. Divine presence, support, resource, go with calling. If these are withheld something is *wrong!* It is of supreme value to know and be in a specific calling; but it is as important to know that it is not an end in itself, but related to something much more. Hence any vision or work must not be an end in itself; but there must be openness to adjustment. Divine innovations, new things and ways hitherto unknown and untrodden.

The one thing that must govern everything is—not the propagation of any 'teaching' or particular truth; not the success of any movement or enterprise; not the creation or enlargement of any community, 'fellowship', or institution, but the honour and glory of

THE NAME

by a deep work of

THE CROSS.

T. A-S.

## THE CROSS AS GOD'S ANSWER

*Reading: Galatians ii. 11 - 20.*

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me" (Galatians ii. 20).

NOT even the apostle Paul could prevent troubles and difficulties arising among the people of God, but he could and did know the answer to them. How important it is that we too should know what to do when the purity and power of the Lord's testimony among His people are threatened. Like Paul, we need to know the Cross as God's answer. It was when there was real danger of a break-up at Antioch that the apostle spoke these words about being crucified with Christ. Galatians ii. 20 is more than a personal statement

of his own experience: it comes as the climax of an argument, a public statement concerning what he twice calls "the truth of the Gospel" (vv. 5 and 14). What is the truth of the Gospel? It is the effective power of the Cross of Christ in human lives. This verse 20 is the last word. The Cross is always the last word. In the menacing situation at Antioch, we may well believe that it was the saving word. If we can picture the tense scene of conflict, we may imagine that at this point the whole legalistic case collapsed: the day was saved. The Cross is a saving message. It was not only the end of Paul's argument, but the end of all argument. The many weighty matters involved were hardly touched upon. The apostle's answer was amazingly brief. It is always like this. Somehow the unending debates and differences lose all their significance when they are brought under the dominating de-

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cision of this one, great, all-inclusive truth. If we have really been crucified with Christ, so much else is seen not to matter.

#### A PERSONAL MATTER

You will notice how personal Paul made it. This is no mere matter of theory or sentiment. Of course it was not meant to be peculiar to himself. What he really meant in saying "I have been crucified with Christ" was that not only he, but Peter, and Barnabas, and all who were truly Christ's, had also been taken to the Cross with their Lord. Nevertheless he was quite ready for the matter to be applied to himself personally, since if truth is to be effective it must be seen to be working in the life of the one who speaks it. The Cross is not a mere verbal answer, a doctrine or a line of truth, but a most practical challenge in the life. Paul was facing people who knew him very well, when he made this statement as to being crucified with Christ. He had lived at Antioch for quite a time. In the heat of such a controversy, if any had been able to say that Paul's life was inconsistent with such a claim, surely they would have said so then. Barnabas was there. Barnabas had lived and travelled with Paul. He must have known much of Paul's private life as well as of his public ministry, for they had worked closely together for some time. Paul, without talking in generalities, as we so often do when we want to excuse ourselves, and without any fear of contradiction, was able to look Barnabas straight in the eye and say, in effect, 'You know, Barnabas, that I am a crucified man'. That is how the Cross works. This does not mean, of course, that Paul was always perfect, and that he never moved from the ground of union with Christ. What he did claim was that his whole life was based upon this position, and that if in any point he ever did move away from it, he was ready enough to be rebuked and to return to it.

#### A PROVISION OF GOD'S LOVE

We notice, too, that the apostle saw a very close association of his experience of the Cross with the great love of Christ. This is very important, since if we get a wrong idea about the inward working of the Cross, we shall lose our own enjoyment of God's love and fail to manifest that love to others. We have no doubt that, for the sinner, the Cross is the outstanding expression of God's love, but when we realise that it brings us, as believers, into a very personal experience of being crucified together with Christ, we are apt to lose sight of the

love of God. We set our teeth, as though making up our minds that from now on everything is going to be grim and harsh. It almost seems that the carnal Christians may be cheerful and happy, but the crucified ones must expect to pass into a gloomier experience. Nothing is farther from the truth. The Cross will always bring us back to the love of God in ever-increasing fulness.

It is love which has provided for us to be crucified with Christ, for only so can we reach God's purposes of glory. Paul was not suggesting that there was any alternative way for Peter and the Jewish Christians, but insisting that their way was bound to lead to disaster. They knew, as well as he did, that there is no other way through to blessing and glory than the way of the Cross.

God's verdict against the natural man and insistence that he must be crucified is not because He is against us: it is in love, because He knows that this is the only adequate answer to all that is against our spiritual progress. Christ is the answer, but the Cross is needed to clear the way for Him. What was the great need at Antioch on this occasion? Was it not that there should be more room for Christ? People were beginning to bring in other things, other interests and other names. Some came from Jerusalem bringing what was taught there, or at least what they claimed to be the teaching of Jerusalem. It may have seemed that there was an issue between Jerusalem and Christ. Paul was not resisting Jerusalem or Peter for personal reasons or out of jealousy for Antioch. He was concerned only for Christ and that there should be room for Him. The Cross ruled out Jerusalem—as such—as it also ruled out Peter and Paul and all else which threatened to take the place of Christ. It was this which made Paul so willing to be crucified with Christ—not that he found it pleasant, but because he realised that this made it possible for Christ to fulfil His purpose of love in the redeemed.

#### GOD'S ANSWER TO THE FLESH

When Paul closed his appeal to Peter with these words, he was not using them as a mere debating point. They were not only an answer which might be calculated to work on Peter's feelings. The Cross was the answer then, because it always is the answer. It is God's answer to every situation. Let us consider this matter of the inworking of the Cross being God's answer to the natural man.

There were three great figures in the scene at Antioch: Paul, Peter and Barnabas. We are surprised at all three of them. We are shocked at

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

Peter's behaviour, and so was Paul. He was even more shocked at the attitude of Barnabas, as appears from his phrase, "even Barnabas was carried away . . ." "Even Barnabas"! Yet, really, the biggest surprise is Paul himself, though in his case the surprise is a very pleasant one. If anybody could be counted on to uphold the superiority of Judaism over all else, surely Saul of Tarsus was that man. Naturally he would have been far more nationalistic and bigoted than the others, and would have been second to none in championing the glories of the Jewish traditions and ecclesiastical system. If it had not been for the Cross, Paul would have been the leader on the other side, far outstripping Peter and Barnabas in their loyalty to Judaism. It was an amazing thing which had happened to him, not only liberating him from the bondage into which the others were slipping, but making him ready to stand alone for the liberty and truth of the Gospel. Those who had known him before might well have asked what had happened to Paul. If they did so, he gave them the answer, "I have been crucified with Christ". What a wonderful provision the Cross is to deliver us from ourselves! Paul might well have been a surprise to himself as well as to others, so complete was the transformation revealed by this stand of his at Antioch.

It was only because he knew the Cross as an up-to-date experience that it was so. This is proved by the extraordinary behaviour of Peter. So incredible is his lapse into Judaism that many have found it difficult to believe that this incident could possibly have taken place after the conversion of Cornelius and the council of Jerusalem. And yet there seems to be no doubt about it. We wonder how a man who had had the vision which Peter received, and who had moreover acted upon that vision and received such a remarkable confirmation by the Holy Spirit as was given at Caesarea, could ever go back upon it. Furthermore we know how he stood by his position when it was challenged by the Judaisers, and how he played a leading part at the council in Jerusalem. This lapse at Antioch was a complete contradiction, not only of the truth of the Gospel, but of his own experience and ministry. Whenever the Cross ceases to operate and the natural life is allowed to reappear, this is just what happens. We become a terrible contradiction, not only to the truth in general but to our own apprehension and proclamation of it. We contradict the very things which we have stood for.

What had happened to Peter? He could preach as good a sermon on grace as could Paul. He had done so to the Jerusalem Council. We are told

quite clearly what was the motive behind his action: it was the fear of man (verse 12). Now we know from the story of his denial of Christ that this was a basic, natural weakness in the old Peter, but we had thought that after Pentecost he had become a transformed man. Yes, he had. He had proved the power of the Cross to undercut and deal with his old nature. It was no longer Peter who lived, but Christ who lived in him. Yet we see that the old nature was still waiting to reassert itself. As soon as Peter moved away from the ground of a present experience of being crucified with Christ, his natural man was found to be the same old Peter, even after all those years. Peter was no carnal or immature Christian. He had known a mighty baptism of the Spirit and had lived for years a life of power and fulness. Nevertheless, the moment he moved off the ground of Christ on to himself he not only failed, but fell into the very same failure which had befallen him so long ago. Is it not amazing that, after years of experience of the Lord and of ministry for Him, it is possible for the very same natural faults to reappear? It would be so, if we had not been warned that our old nature never changes—it does not adapt itself to our new position. The only answer which God has to our natural propensities to fail and dishonour Him is the answer of the Cross. If only Peter will come back with Paul on to that ground, and say with him, "I have been crucified with Christ", he will be delivered from his natural weakness, just as Paul has been delivered from his natural strength.

The natural life is always a great menace to the Lord. This is true even in the case of Barnabas. Paul speaks of him in terms of sorrow rather than of anger, for Barnabas was evidently deceived: "even Barnabas was carried away with their dissimulation". He need not have been tricked in this way, and he would not have been if he had truly been living by faith in the Son of God. When the Cross works in us, it undercuts all our own natural strength and wisdom, leaving us wholly dependent on a faith relationship with the Lord. In a very practical and sometimes in a painful way it is "no longer I". But it is the only safe way, and ensures deliverance from the deception to which the natural man is so prone. Even Barnabas is not safe unless he remains on the basis of being crucified with Christ. In his case it would seem that his very virtues were his undoing. We are told that he was a good man, a most attractive character—generous, kindly, and large-hearted. Quite probably his failure at Antioch was due to a very natural desire on his part to be tolerant



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and sympathetic; he would not wish to offend such a great servant of the Lord as Peter, and would perhaps describe his action as showing fellowship. But true fellowship will never draw us off the ground of the Cross. The large heart of the natural man is not the same thing as the love of Christ. Barnabas may have been a nicer man than Peter naturally, but he was just as much a menace to the spiritual growth of the Church as all the others, if he ceased to maintain his position of being crucified with Christ. Let us make no mistake about it—good nature can be just as dangerous as bad nature. It is *nature* that is dangerous, and for that danger God has only one answer—the Cross.

### GOD'S ANSWER TO DIVISION

We are appalled to discover that there had been division at Antioch. This was the church which was so strikingly free from any sectarianism at the beginning, the church born and reared in the abundant grace of God. It stands in the Book of the Acts as a kind of prototype of that heavenly Church in which "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all, and in all" (Col. iii, 11). How could such a sad state of affairs come into being at Antioch? How was it possible that strife and division and bitterness could displace that gracious unity of which Barnabas himself had been a witness? Of course, the answer is: uncrucified flesh. But it is a very solemn reflection to consider how much of this tragic confusion seems to have been Peter's responsibility. At least this argument and appeal was addressed to Peter, as though Paul felt him to be the responsible one. Peter's "I" was not crucified, and one uncrucified person can bring in tremendous havoc to the work of the Lord, especially if that person is a leader. It is no use pointing back to Peter's commissioning by Christ or to the wonderful way in which he had been used in the past. For us all, crucifixion must be an absolutely up-to-date experience; if not, we shall soon be breaking up the unity of the Lord's work. If for a moment we get off the ground of crucifixion with Christ, differences, rifts, divisions and bitterness of spirit are bound to result.

The Cross is such a wonderful counter to all divisiveness that even at Jerusalem, where every outward thing might seem to encourage this difference, there was a blessed harmony. Paul tells us in Galatians ii. 9 of the meeting together of James, Peter, Barnabas and himself in an atmosphere of remarkable unity as they perceived the

grace of God in one another. There was perhaps little to help at Jerusalem, but circumstances matter nothing where the Cross is truly operative. These men rejoiced in one another, gave to one another the right hand of fellowship, and recognised that even in their diversity of gifts Christ was being truly magnified. Now the same four men's names arise at Antioch, but oh, how different is the atmosphere. Things should have been very much easier for harmonious fellowship there. Outwardly there was nothing to disturb their unity in Christ. But however propitious and helpful circumstances may seem to be, as soon as some of those concerned get away from the ground of the Cross, bitter controversies and divisions are bound to supervene. The difference of function did not matter at Jerusalem, for they were all crucified men. The difference at Antioch did matter, for it was a difference of spirit, a division in fellowship.

So much for the event. What was the answer? Here we must follow the apostle Paul closely. He had a duty to reprove and to reason, and he fulfilled his duty. The true secret of the victory for the Lord, though, was not his powers of argument, but that he stood among them as one who could truly say, "I have been crucified with Christ". We are most of us ready enough to blame others, and to seek to put them right. Let us pause for a moment, in the midst of whatever confusion or division may surround us, and ask ourselves, 'Am I a truly crucified Christian?' That is what mattered most. We do not know who else stood with the apostle, but we can surely see the immense value of having one man truly on the ground of the Cross. We have every reason to believe that Peter and Barnabas, and most of those concerned, were led back on to that ground, and in this way unity and harmony were restored. God's answer to a divided Church is the answer of the Cross.

### GOD'S ANSWER TO LIMITATION

The reason for the apostle's alarm at the situation which was developing at Antioch was that he could see how seriously it would cripple and curtail that movement of the Holy Spirit which had found its centre there. The early days of that Church's history were days of widespread spiritual usefulness and ever-increasing ministry. Paul could see that Judaism would reduce this full expression of Christ to something static and self-contained, setting severe limits to the Spirit and fixing the bounds of the work of the Lord to narrow party dimensions. If once we move on to natural ground, we call a halt to the spiritual expansion which the Cross makes possible.

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Now it does not always seem like this. In fact it almost always appears to be just the opposite. One of the reasons why we recoil from the message of the Cross is that we are made to feel that this will lessen our opportunities and limit our scope of service. To be reduced to nothing by the Cross seems a strange way of enlargement; to our natural reasoning it seems to threaten the very opposite. What does God say about this? He points us to His dear Son, who has found universal fulness *by being crucified*. He reminds us of the apostle Paul. While the opponents of the Cross of his day are now unknown and unimportant, we see that Paul accomplished infinitely more for Christ than did they all. And he was ready enough to give his own explanation of that fact—"I have been crucified with Christ". No, the Cross does not mean limitation. Indeed, it is the only way out of it.

## GOD'S ANSWER TO SATAN

There is no other explanation to this deep suspicion of, and resentment to, the message of the Cross, than that Satan himself has a hand in the matter. How very wily is the enemy of God's people. He realised that the Church at Antioch stood for something of real spiritual value—that it counted for the Lord. It had become a centre of living ministry in the power of the Spirit. These saints were a real menace to the kingdom of darkness. He could not destroy them. He did not need to try. He only needed to get them off the ground of the Cross, living as uncrucified Christians, and he would have brought about a most effectual cur-

tailment and limitation of their spiritual power. It was largely owing to the faithful stand of Paul that Satan did not succeed at Antioch, but it is a sobering thought that even great apostles like Peter and Barnabas were blind to the real issues behind what was going on. Now, as then, this is the greatest threat to the vital power of the Church: not persecution, not poverty, not sin or false doctrine, but uncrucified flesh. And let us remember that even those who have long known what it means to be crucified with Christ can all too easily move away from that ground, and reason and act as men. If they do, a victory for Satan is sure.

But, on the other hand, if only this ground can be truly established and held, Satan will just as surely be defeated. When there is spiritual defeat it is the "I" who is the occasion of the defeat, whether it be an individual or a corporate "I". We are no match for our great adversary. We never mean to give him an advantage. I am sure that Peter would have been shocked if it had been suggested to him that once again he was letting Satan into the situation. The fact is, our enemy is too cunning for us—too cunning and much too strong. But if we can truly say, "No longer I", then he cannot get the advantage. He has been vanquished by Christ: he has been completely defeated by the Cross. It is of little use reminding him of this in mere words. That is no answer. No, the answer of God to Satan is a people in whom the Cross is now working. Galatians ii. 20 is more than the secret of personal holiness, though it is that. It is God's way of answering and overcoming the whole kingdom of Satan.

H. F.

## THE RECOVERING OF THE LORD'S TESTIMONY IN FULNESS

## I. THE FIRST MOVEMENT

*"And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?" (Nehemiah vi. 3).*

*"And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God put into my heart to do for Jerusalem" (Nehemiah ii. 12).*

THESE two fragments—"I am doing a great work". "what my God put into my heart to do"

—give us the entrance into the great matter which is historically set forth in the book of Nehemiah.

## THREE THINGS ESSENTIAL TO A FULNESS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

There are three things which are essential to an adequate life with God, to a fulness of the Christian life.

Firstly, the realisation that God is concerned with the accomplishment of something worthy of Himself. We shall not get very far toward a full Christian life, or a life with God, until it breaks

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upon us and takes hold of us that God is really concerned with the accomplishment of something worthy of Himself.

The second thing is that people shall become aware of what that great something in the heart of God is, what it is that God is so concerned with, and then that they shall be moved to co-operate with Him in it. That is an essential to a life of fullness with God, that we His people shall come to see what it is that He is really set upon, what it is that will really be worthy of Himself, and, more than that, that we shall become so deeply moved about this matter as to co-operate with Him in it.

And then, in the third place, that we recognise that this object in the heart of God and this co-operation with Him by His people involves very real conflict and cost, and that His people must face that and be ready to accept it.

These three things comprise the elements and features of a full life with God, and not one of them can be lacking. The very conflict and cost will themselves be the evidences of the value of the thing into which the people of God have been brought, and the thing which is so dear to God's heart. Where there is no conflict and no cost, there may be reason to feel that the outcome is not worth while. I think that the view of the Apostles, at any rate, was that the conflict was the complement of the calling so great and so high.

So that here in this book of Nehemiah we have those three things brought before us in a very full and a very powerful way. They are: a great Cost, a great Work, and a great Conflict.

The book of Nehemiah, as you will know, and indeed Nehemiah himself, is a great historic illustration of a much greater spiritual reality. What we have here on the earth in literal history is but a reflection of what is going on in this dispensation in the spiritual realm, and what in this dispensation is so much greater than anything that ever was in days gone past on this earth.

Now we have these three features here. They are: the wall or its rebuilding—that is the object, that is the purpose, that is the thing in view. Then we have the work of rebuilding, and the workers; and then we have, going hand-in-hand with the purpose and the work, the warfare. The Wall, the Work, the Warfare; or, in other words, the Calling, the Conduct and the Conflict. These comprise what we can now call, in present-day or present-time language, the recovery and completing of the Lord's testimony, for that is really what is before us at this time. And so we may set over this whole matter, this little fragment: "a great work"—"I am doing a great work": and it is with this great

work that we shall be occupied, as the Lord leads us.

#### GOD'S REACTION IN A DAY OF SPIRITUAL DECLENSION

Nehemiah is the last great character of the Old Testament and his book the last historic book of the Old Testament. Those who do not study the chronological arrangement of the Old Testament books may not be altogether alive to these facts. Because the book of Nehemiah comes in our Bibles so much before the end of the Old Testament, it is taken by many to relate chronologically to a very much earlier period; but it really ought to be alongside of the prophecies of Malachi. When we come to Nehemiah we are contemporary with the prophet Malachi.

Haggai and Zechariah uttered their prophecies and passed on. Zerubbabel the governor, and Joshua the high priest, had accomplished their ministry. Ezra had fulfilled his part of the work, as the prophets mentioned had inspired the people to finish the rebuilding of the Temple. And then there set in a course of spiritual decline. Great things had taken place under Haggai, Zerubbabel, Joshua, Zechariah; but that glory faded; that promise seemed to be short-lived. We come to Malachi—and you know the content of Malachi's prophecies. Indeed, a 'radiant morn had passed away': indeed things had become overclouded; deep shadows of spiritual declension filled the sky over Jerusalem; and all those sad, yes, terrible things mentioned by Malachi are found, after all, amongst the people of God: so that only within the remnant that had returned from the captivity was there found a remnant of the remnant—"they that feared the Lord" (Mal. iii. 16)—and it was into those conditions, in the midst of such a state, that Nehemiah came to fulfil his ministry.

This man came to Jerusalem and set about the undertaking which is indicated at the beginning of the book which bears his name—the rebuilding of the wall. I think that that carries with it a wonderful, yes, inspiring significance: that in a day, such as that day in which Malachi prophesied and uttered his terrible words from the Lord, the Lord has not abandoned—the Lord acts again; and this rebuilding of the wall is God's action in a day of spiritual declension. It almost shouts to us that God, after all, and in the worst times, is still committed to the recovery and completion of His testimony. It is most impressive that the book of Nehemiah—the last historic book of the Old Testament, with Nehemiah the last great man of the Old



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Testament—is marked, in a day of terrible spiritual decline, by God acting again in relation to His testimony. Sometimes we are tempted to feel that the time has gone and conditions are too bad, and we can hope for nothing very much in view of the situation; but this book and this man administer a very sound rebuke to any such pessimism.

## TRAVAIL IN PRAYER

Now, before we take up the three main features of the Wall, the Work and the Warfare, we must begin with an essential factor which is embodied in Nehemiah himself. We have to go back a little, because the beginning of this thing was many years before, more than seventy years before, and it began in the heart of the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah was a man with a broken heart, a man of a sorrowful spirit—a man whose heart was broken and whose spirit was sorrowful because of the conditions amongst the Lord's people; and Jeremiah in that travail fulfilled his ministry, and gave utterance to a declaration, a prophecy, that the people would go into captivity for seventy years. That, as we know, came to pass; and then, as the seventy years were expiring, another man right in the heart of the situation in Babylon took up Jeremiah's travail. Jeremiah fulfilled his ministry of travail: Daniel took up the travail in prayer. Daniel tells us (chapter ix) that he came to know, "by the books", that the captivity was to be for seventy years; and now he sees that the seventy years are coming to an end, and so he gives himself to intense prayer. Note: a ministry of travail by Jeremiah, an enlightened intercessory travail by Daniel—for he has become aware of the time in which he lives. He has come to realise *by the books* that the time is fulfilled, and so he takes up the travail in this tremendous prayer in the ninth chapter of the book of Daniel.

## GOD'S SOVEREIGN REACTION

Now we have the next move. Because the time has come and God is on the move again for the recovery of His testimony, He sovereignly stirs up the spirit of Cyrus, who makes a decree, and the remnant return to Jerusalem. The last two verses of the second book of the Chronicles, as you know, state the fact, and then the very first verses of the book of Ezra following repeat the words exactly, "The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia", and Ezra was one of the fruits of that sovereign movement of God. When Ezra fulfilled his part of the ministry, we come to Nehe-

miah, and we find again the taking up of that essential factor which has led to this co-operation with God.

In the first chapter of Nehemiah and into the second chapter, we find Nehemiah gripped, deeply and terribly gripped, by this travail—this travail which commenced with Jeremiah, this travail which was born in the heart of Daniel away in Babylon. Here it is in Nehemiah—travail which is an echo of the very heart of God concerning His people. We have to fit a great deal of prophetic utterance into this situation, to hear the cry of those prophets, all of them, as they express God's mind and God's heart about the state of His people. Now that cry—shall we say, that sob—in the heart of God is born into this man; it finds its culmination, so far as the Old Testament is concerned, in the heart of Nehemiah.

Note, before we go further, these two factors, these two main aspects. Firstly, God acting sovereignly. That is where the movement begins. God stirred up the spirit of Cyrus and you have all that wonderful movement of sovereignty as recorded in the book of Ezra. Those of you who are familiar with that book will recall at once the marvellous facilities which God brought about through the Persian ruler for the rebuilding of the temple: every provision made, everything seen to that the thing should be done; God acting sovereignly. That is one side.

MAN SUFFERING  
IN FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

But here in Nehemiah you have the other side—man in suffering fellowship with God. Ezra is the sovereignty of God; Nehemiah is the fellowship with God by man. Ezra is God acting directly and independently; Nehemiah is man acting with God, or God acting through man. Those two things always go together—remember that. We must never think, because God is sovereign and His purposes are fixed and settled and He can do as He will, act independently, He is self-sufficient, that He will in fact act like that. He never has done so. Since the creation He has always brought men into fellowship with Himself in His sovereign purposes—into deep fellowship and travelling fellowship. So however great may be the need, whatever may be the demand, the call, the tragedy, which makes it necessary for God to act sovereignly in the first place. He is not going to do it until He can find an instrument which shares His heart feeling, carries His heart burden, enters into heart co-operation with Him.

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Nehemiah was such a one. So far as the practical side was concerned, in this final movement of God in that dispensation, everything had its beginning in the heart of Nehemiah. That man's heart is revealed in the very first chapter of this book. It is therefore very necessary for purposes of to-day—for I am not stopping now to try to make a parallel between our time and the time of Nehemiah: that I take it is patent and obvious to anyone with spiritual perception—but if God is going to do something to-day with regard to the recovery and completion of His testimony, which needs recovering and needs completing. He will have to have the counterpart of Nehemiah—a vessel with a great concern, the very concern of God Himself, born in its heart.

For a few minutes, then, let us look at Nehemiah's concern.

### NEHEMIAH'S CONCERN

This man had a true appreciation both of how things ought to be and of how they actually were. We will never get anywhere as instrumental in the purpose of God until those two things are clear in our hearts—how things actually are, and then how things ought to be, how God would have things if He had them according to His mind, His heart, what things would be like if they did reflect and express the purpose of God. You and I will never get very far, if we get anywhere at all, in our relationship with God, until we are seeing something of the real state of things in contrast with the mind of God—until we have seen really what God wants, what God really has His heart set upon, exactly how things would be if they were according to His will.

Then, of course, we must see the contrasts, the conflicting factors, the nature of the situation as it is not according to God's mind. Nehemiah was such a man. He looked, he formed his judgment upon the data: he saw—on the one hand, what God would have: on the other hand, how different things were from what God would have. There are, of course, many people who can be very critical of Christianity, very critical of the Church, who have quite a lot of mental appraisal and judgment of the situation, who in a very superior way talk down about the bad conditions which exist among Christians and in the Church, and who can give themselves quite cheaply to deploring the state of things.

Nehemiah was not of that kind. Nehemiah was not just negative: Nehemiah was positive, he was constructive. He was not only the one who could

say, 'Now, look at the situation—look how different it is from what God intended and what God willed—see this and see that and see the other thing'. Not only was he able to do that, but he was able to bring forth a positive remedy and to show how the thing could be changed to provide a way for recovery. He was a man of positive vision. There are so many people who take a negative line, and when you ask them what ought to be done, what is the thing we must do about it, they have nothing to bring forward. It is all negative—and very plentiful, at that!—but there is nothing to present or provide. Nehemiah was not that kind of man. He was fully acquainted with the situation: he knew just how deplorable it was. You notice several times he speaks of it, but he had the remedy. He was a positive man and a man of action, because he was a man of vision. He was not just 'visionary', in the negative sense: he was a man of action in relation to what he saw.

And that, dear friends, does present us with a challenge. I have no doubt but that most of us could point the finger at things which are not according to God's mind amongst His people, in His Church; could point out how different things are from what we can see they ought to be—how bad this is and how bad that is. Oh, that is easy and that is very cheap—to criticize and to listen to criticism and to agree with it, to take it in, and to nurse the complaints, to keep them alive. But it is another thing altogether to be able to come forward and say, 'Look here, this is not good, this is not as the Lord would have it, and *this is what we ought to do*. This is the thing that the Lord would have done, this is the thing to which we must give ourselves, to change this situation'. I venture to say that we have no right to criticize and judge and condemn if we have not got a remedy, if we have not got something positive to put in the place of what we see. So let us be quiet if we cannot provide something better, but the Lord save us from having to be quiet just because we *are* negative, and make us active because we have got vision.

I ask you: How true is this in your own case? What vision have you? Do you see what the Lord has ever meant, has ever intended?—what really is in His heart, what He would have, and how He would have things? Do you see just exactly how things would be if the Lord had His way and reached His end? Do you? Are you able to see how different things are from what the Lord would have, and then are you so exercised in your heart, as were these men and as was this man, that you say, 'Something must be done about it, we must get to work, by the help of God we must change

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this situation—believing that it is God's will that it should be so? Are you of that kind? Well, that is the appeal of this book.

## THE FEATURES OF NEHEMIAH'S TRAVAIL

Let us spend a little while in looking still more inwardly into this travail of Nehemiah's. What were the features of his travail? I have been trying to understand him, to read him, to get into his heart, to get behind his cry, behind his sorrow, his burden in his distress. As I have done so, it has seemed that these are some of the things which lay behind this travail of his.

Nehemiah saw how things ought to be, and how things really were; and then he saw his own position. There he was, away there in Shushan the palace, cupbearer to the king. He was an exile, and he was virtually a slave, one who had been taken on as a servant in the palace. From the standpoint of that palace, and from the standpoint of Babylon, it may have been an honourable position; but from his own standpoint he was like a slave in the world: he was spending his time in *the world*, the business of *this world*, and his whole soul was groaning. 'Here am I in the business of this world, having to go to work every morning and finishing late at night, and this is repeated day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year—and my soul cries out to be doing something about the purpose of God and the situation of the Lord's people'. This cry against his own position was a feature of his travail.

God is sovereign even in that. Perhaps that touches you who are reading these lines. You are going to work every morning and coming home every evening, and by far the greater amount of your time and strength is occupied with serving this world. You feel like a slave to this world, and you say, 'Oh, that I might be free to do something for God!' My dear friend, there is value in travail like that. There were many in Babylon who had settled down and accepted the situation, who were taking up business and earning wages, and were making this now their life. They saw nothing more than that, or other than that. But not so Nehemiah. His soul revolted against his position in the world. 'Oh, to be free to do something for God!' That travail meant something to God. That travail was the birth pangs of something for God.

If you are not knowing something of that—the drudgery of the home-life, perhaps you might call it 'the trivial round, the common task', the going to work by morning and coming home by evening

—and there is at the same time in your soul no cry for the interests of God, you are a tragedy indeed. But it may be that all the time, in and through it, you are longing to be able to do more for the Lord. Let me say that that is the kind of travail that is going to be fruitful. It is going to be fruitful in some way or other. It will out—*it will out* in some way or other. Something will come of that. I am not going to say that the day will come when you will be released from your worldly occupation and set free for what you call 'full-time service'. I think it is a very real mistake to talk about the service of God in that way, for you may in your own travail be serving God in a potential way where you are. There may be tremendous potentialities in this travail in your heart as you go about your daily work, all the time more concerned for the Lord's interests than for this world.

I think it must have been like that with Nehemiah. 'Here I am, the king's cupbearer!' You can almost hear the revolt in his heart. How little he thought of this—because how much more the Lord's interests had become to him! That man, that ruler, that king, was a great man, the greatest man in the world at that time. It was no small thing to be his cupbearer, and to be in the palace of Shushan, the same place where Esther and Mordecai were. You know all about them from the book of Esther, and all that was represented there. Yet when Nehemiah came to the point of answering the king's question as to why he was sad of countenance, his prayer to the Lord was not couched in language of great respect and honour for the king. "Prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of *this man*" (Neh. i. 11). A great king—'this man'!

Oh, this was all so mean compared with the Lord and His interest! He could not accept this, he was in travail. You see, the greatest honours that this world can give, the highest position that we may occupy here, are just *nothing* to men and women who have seen what the Lord is after. All honours, all degrees, all positions, are as nothing when once you have seen the on-high calling. 'I count them as very refuse', said Paul (Phil. iii. 8), 'these things of honour and glory in this world'. He had seen the Lord and the heavenly calling. Nehemiah's position was, I am sure, one great factor in his travail.

And then there was the long delay. 'Oh, the time is so long! Oh, that we could do something!' The Lord is demanding such patience: we kick against the delays of the Lord. We are so deeply tested by deferred opportunities. Is it not true? Nothing opening up: no way. But the point is—are we



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really in travail about this thing? I am sure that the Lord uses delays and deferments in order to test us as to our real concern. Some people have not to be put off very much before they give up altogether. Some people can have only a little discouragement, a little trial of patience, and they say, 'Well, it is not worth it', and they quit. Here is a man who went on all these years in deep trial of patience, tested by the long-delayed opportunity to do something; but he held on to the end, and the fact is that he was most vigorous after all in his quest for the Lord's interests.

How is this long delay, deferred opportunity, affecting you? Is this purpose of God so deep in you that it is stronger than all other deferred hopes, disappointed expectations? This man's soul was starved—his *soul* was starved. I mean by that he was always anxious and eager to *do* something; in *doing something* he would have found his real gratification and satisfaction and pleasure. His soul would have gone out at liberty to do things, but he was starved in his soul and brought more and more to the place where, if ever anything was going to be done at all, it would be God who did it—'I will never be able to do this'. That is a great place to come to. 'God has to open this door, God has to provide this opportunity, God has to see that this thing is done. I can do nothing, I am helpless!' But that soul starvation, what it costs us! If only we could do something, how much easier it would be, or if we could do more, how much more satisfaction we would have! But that is a part of our preparation. Indeed, it is out of that that real spiritual values come.

Nehemiah had the report from his brethren who came back as to the state of things in Jerusalem. The walls were broken down, the gates were burned with fire, and the people were in a deplorable position. He had the report, he knew all about the need, but he was totally unable to do anything. Only God could do it. Do believe, dear friends, that that is a position which gives great promise. That is a position to which God works. Those who are going to be most used of the Lord and most fruitful in fellowship with the Lord will come to the place, not once nor twice, but again and again, where they know they can do nothing; only the Lord can do it. But their soul is in travail over the whole thing. It is not a matter of throwing up the hands and sitting back and saying, 'I can do nothing, therefore I do not care'. That is not Nehemiah, not at all. He turned his travail into prayer:

and you know when travail becomes prayer and prayer is travail, things are very real, things are very pure—because that kind of prayer and travail deals with all the *self* elements.

How often there are elements of ambition in our wanting to do something, that we should come into the work, that we should come into the picture, that we should come into the satisfaction of doing something, that we should be in some position; and when the Lord deals with us like this and the whole agony turns to prayer, in that prayer all these self elements are dealt with very thoroughly and go out. The very fact that it is *travailing prayer* when nothing else can be done proves that there is no self in this. Our praying is travail. It is not asking for something for ourselves—it is agony for what is of God.

Presently Nehemiah will be charged with having personal interests. His enemies will say that he is wanting to set himself up as the king, and he is appointing prophets to preach him. What a subtle assault of the devil to bring an accusation upon the man to undo him! If it were true, how he would be undone by that assault of the devil! If the devil ever has real ground to say, 'After all, it is Number One that is governing this whole thing: it is your own ambition, it is yourself!'—if he has ground for saying that, we may well be flooded and undone. But it had to be so with Nehemiah that such accusations had no ground. He was able to say: 'You feigned this out of your own mind' (Neh. vi. 8). 'This is not true, God has dealt with me in the depths. He has sifted my soul of all such interests for myself'. The ground had to be undercut from the enemy so that he had nothing personal upon which to work.

Now, Nehemiah's countenance was sad before the king, and the king noted it. But his countenance did not speak of self-pity or of personal frustration. It spoke of grief concerning spiritual conditions.

The Lord knows how things are at the present time. The Lord sees how different they are from what He intended. He knows all about this. He must bring some people to see as He sees, and feel as He feels, and commit themselves to that which He shows them, at any cost. This introductory word is the challenge. We cannot go on with the work or the warfare until we are like this, really like this—people after the kind of Nehemiah. The Lord make us that.

T. A. S.

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

## THANKSGIVING FOR THANKSGIVING

*A Message Given on a National Day of Thanksgiving**Reading: II Corinthians i. 11; iv. 15; ix. 10-12.*

IN these three portions, the Apostle's gratitude is not for a deliverance or for a blessing, but his joy with thanksgiving abounds unto God because something happens and spontaneously men give thanks to God. 'Well', Paul says, 'that is fine. I am glad because of that!' It seems evident, therefore, that an end which is desirable and good in itself is that thanksgiving should be rendered to God. We want to be large-hearted in this matter. Large-heartedness is not necessarily compromise. There are always degrees of apprehension and always degrees of fulness in men's approach to God, whether it be in seeking Him for help or in giving thanks to Him. If we take the attitude of the carping critic and say, 'Yes, well, anybody would who received favour, but what is the worth of it? Tomorrow they will go out and live careless lives again—is that right?' Ought we not to be thankful to God if there are men thanking God at all? If in their way they are acknowledging that God is, is that not something to be glad about? Which is better—that men should pray to God in a time of need and then forget to thank Him, or that they do not pray at all, but when a mercy has been received they come back and thank God for it? Is this not better? I think it is.

You remember what the Psalmist says in the fiftieth Psalm—"Whoso offereth the sacrifice of thanksgiving glorifieth me" (verse 23). *Whoso* offereth. We make a lot of the 'whosoever's' of the New Testament. Shall we not thank God that the worldlings to-day are offering thanksgiving? That is glorifying God in its measure, and more than that; for whosoever does that glorifies God, "and" the margin says, "prepareth a way that I may shew him the salvation of God". He is making way for further occasion to praise God. Oh, we have not learned the effectiveness of a praising and a thanksgiving way with God for a mercy, that gives Him the chance to show us another mercy! If our land, if the worldlings, will only get into the way of thanking God, they will find they have fresh cause to thank Him and He will not be slow to come in on any chink that gives a way for the light. Let us thank God that thanksgiving is abounding unto God to-day whatever its degree and from the lips of whomsoever it comes. It is a true gesture if men say—and they need not have

said it—'Let us mark a certain day by thanking God'. Well, we will thank God for that. So we have a double cause of thanksgiving: that which they have, and then the fact that they are offering thanksgiving themselves.

Let us consider this matter of degree. In I Chron. xvi. we have the story of the bringing up of the ark. In verse 7 we read: "Then on that day did David first ordain to give thanks unto the Lord, by the hand of Asaph and his brethren". The margin says, "did David make it the chief work to give thanks unto the Lord"—on the day in which the ark was brought up into its rightful place.

Now, what is that? We know the bringing up of the ark is putting Jesus Christ in His true place. That is a matter of degree. We have not reached the last degree of giving Jesus Christ His true place in our lives, and if men in any degree put Jesus Christ into His true place, even if the measure of it be so small that you almost need a microscope to discover it—if it is in any degree giving Jesus Christ His place, let us make it our chief work to give thanks to God for it. Then you come to verse 37: "So he left there, before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, Asaph and his brethren, to minister before the ark continually, as every day's work required: . . . and with them Heman and Jeduthun, and the rest that were chosen, who were expressed by name, to give thanks to the Lord, because his mercy endureth for ever" (vv. 37, 41).

We turn to II Chronicles v. Here the ark is brought into its final resting place in the Temple. "It came to pass, when the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God". That also is a question of degree of apprehension. Men to-day are saying, 'God has been good'. What do they mean? They mean, in a very limited sense, 'We are acknowledging God's mercy to us'. What do you mean when you say, "The Lord is good: his mercy endureth for ever"? Do you mean, 'Thank the Lord for the

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victory of last week!"? You mean more than that. But you do not yet know the depth of the meaning of the word. "His mercy endureth for ever".

Now note: it says that there were some who praised with their voices, and there were some who blew with the trumpets, and there were some who offered burnt-offerings. When they were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord, then the house was filled with a cloud. I am struck with that little phrase "when they were as one". It seems to me to convey this. Here are trumpeters; their testimony is not the testimony that is uttered from the heart. They could be most indifferent inwardly and still blow the trumpet. The trumpet may be the outward testimony, the Church's declaration, if you like, about the Lord. The Church has a declaration about the Lord; people are constantly preaching about the Lord. It may be a sound, a note, contradicted from within, but here are some who, with their own voices as from within themselves, say, 'The Lord is good!' Here is the outward testimony of the Church; here is the inward heart expression of the child of God; and when they are as one in praising and thanking the Lord, then the glory of the Lord fills the house. We have the world's testimony to-day—'God is good!' But you say, 'Inside it is all hollow!' But in our hearts there is to be the correspondence with that testimony. Perhaps to-day we can supply the song. From our innermost heart there may be issuing the note of His praise, whilst they outside are giving, as it were, a kind of trumpet sound that does not spring deeply from within. But when there is a correspondence; when there is the flowing out in sincerity of that which they easily utter—'The Lord is good'—and to-morrow will have forgotten; when we from the depths of our being say, '*The Lord is good!*', that is the chance for the Lord's glory.

In I Chronicles xvi, David left Zadok the priest and others to offer up the continual burnt offering every morning and evening. When the day with its particular joy had passed away, and the people who were not very deeply moved, only superficially and temporarily, perhaps, had gone, there were some who were priests whose duty it became to maintain day and night the burnt offering before God. The superficial ones passed out; the light, easy-going kind of thanksgiving became silent very quickly; but there remained something behind, and it was only the priests who could do this and their business was to offer the continual burnt offering morning and evening. If to-day the world outside is thanking God for something—with

which thanksgiving we also join—our ministry does not end there. Their thanksgiving will end there, until there is another occasion to evoke a similar outburst of praise, but it does not disturb the basic ministry that we have. We continue in the offering morning and evening, giving praise unto God by Him.

The world to-day is glad for a particular event. It is thanking God for a thing. We turn to our New Testament and we read: "In everything give thanks" (I Thess. v, 18). We read again: "Giving thanks for all things" (Eph. v, 20). When the children of Israel came through the Red Sea, they had an outburst of praise that corresponds to what we are seeing to-day—and inside a matter of hours they were murmuring because they had no water. They were not praising in the absence of water; they were grumbling.

The Lord says to us who, by His Spirit, have the deeper things in our hearts, 'Join in praise with those who praise: but for you it must be a steadily maintained basis of praise to God continually by Jesus Christ—not just for a special mercy received, not for a deliverance specially given, but in all things and for all things offering the sacrifice of praise to God continually'.

I feel the message of to-day to our hearts is that we see more clearly than we have hitherto how much it means to God when people thank Him, when people bring Him the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and that we should bring it to Him more often, bring Him His Son as our offering and as the ground of all our thanksgiving. 'In all things giving thanks.' In our trials giving thanks, in our defeats giving thanks. We are giving thanks for a victory to-day, but the Lord says, 'Give thanks in all things, in your tribulations, in your present affliction'. 'Whosoever giveth thanks maketh a way for God to show His salvation.'

There is a distinction. There are some outside who are just on the surface, sincerely but superficially bringing that which is well-pleasing to God. God has a priestly house, the members of which have been initiated into the mystery, and He says to them, 'Keep the continual burnt-offering going'. You remember in Hezekiah's story it says, "When the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also" (II Chron. xxix. 27). You see the relationship: the burnt offering and the song are one thing, and when everything can be viewed in the light of Christ, in the light of the offering of Calvary, even a trial, even an affliction, even a deep depression in the realm of affairs, can be a matter seen in this light—the light of the offering up of Christ; that in that light it becomes



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a matter for praise. This Lamb that was offered up is now in the Throne ruling, 'doing whatsoever He hath pleased'; and it has pleased Him that this thing should happen. That has pleased Him: He has allowed it or He has done it. 'Then, Lord, I thank Thee because in all that Thou doest Thou doest good, right, well!' So everything, if seen in the light of the continual Burnt-offering, becomes a matter for praise and thanksgiving. The more thanksgiving that is poured out at His feet, the wider does the door swing open for Him to show the salvation He longs to show.

These are only scattered fragments of thought which have been in my mind as I have contemplated this hour. It just comes down to this. While we rejoice with others to-day, our thanksgiving goes on in the light and on the level of Christ Jesus the Lord, the acceptable Offering continually to be presented, and in the light of this we can

afford to praise Him for everything. It might be that your way of escape out of your present trial lies just here. Can you take it to Him in the light of the offering up of Jesus Christ, and in this light praise Him for that trial, praise Him for your present difficulty? You might get through, you might open the door for Him to show you the salvation of God. I know you cannot do it if you look at the thing in itself and say, 'How can any man thank God for this?' But see it in the light of Christ, God's continual Lamb, offering Himself in sacrifice; and see this Lamb in the Throne. Things take on a new colour altogether. The way of escape is to accept it as from Him through Christ, an expression of His will. His will is good. The Lord help us to bring Him the "sacrifice of praise . . . continually . . . the fruit of lips which make confession to his name".

G. P.

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRIST

## V. IN RELATION TO HIS RESURRECTION-ASCENSION

*"Jesus saith to her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended unto the Father: but go unto my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God" (John xx. 17).*

*"For the death that he died, he died unto sin once: but the life that he liveth, he liveth unto God. . . . Present yourselves unto God, as alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God" (Romans vi. 10, 13).*

EVERYTHING waited on the resurrection of Christ. When He died, everything stood still. There was silence in heaven, darkness over the face of the earth. There was a universal pause, and heaven was holding its breath. The resurrection of Christ was the greatest and most momentous event in history. Everything that had preceded it, His birth, His life, His teaching, His works, His death and all that that death meant, His atoning work: all waited for His resurrection to make them effective. If He had died and not lived again, it would all have been of no profit. 'If Christ be not risen, our faith is vain, we are yet in our sins' (I Cor. xv. 17), although He died an atoning death.

## A PRE-ASCENSION ASCENSION

The passage we read in John xx--the words to Mary—is a remarkable one. "Touch me not"—

that is, lay not hold of Me—"for I am not yet ascended unto the Father". There has been much speculation as to this pre-ascension ascension. The fact that this very woman was allowed to take hold of Him later (Matt. xxviii. 9) gives much point and strength, with other things, to there having taken place an ascension.

## CHRIST THE FIRST-FRUITS

Of course, one thing was the fulfilment of an Old Testament type, and was the spiritual, the Divine heavenly counterpart of something that was probably taking place on that very day. On the day after the Sabbath the High Priest would be waving the sheaf of firstfruits before the Lord, according to Leviticus xxiii, and it was on that very day after the Sabbath that Jesus presented Himself alive to the Father from the dead. As Paul says: "But now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep" (I Cor. xv. 20).

That, of course, is one of the meanings of this—"I am not yet ascended"; but there is much more in it than that, and we will seek to see something more of this ascension of Christ to the Father on the morrow after the Sabbath.

## FIRSTBORN AMONG MANY BRETHREN

We begin by noting that it was the presenting

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of Himself as alive from the dead, for God's satisfaction, in a representation. He had been true to the figure of the firstfruits. The sheaf of the firstfruits was representative of all that was to come. It was the prophecy of that which was to be, it was the earnest of the whole, it was the certainty that the harvest was on its way; and it was accepted as that. God was satisfied that all the travail, all the labour, all the falling into the ground and dying, all the giving over of life unto death, was eventually not for nought. God was satisfied that in the Firstfruits He had all the fruits of that death; a representation—"the firstfruits of them that are asleep"; or, in other words of the Apostle, "the firstborn among many brethren" (Romans viii. 29). That is surely inherent in these two words in John xx. 17: "Go unto my brethren"—not, 'Go to My disciples', or 'to My Apostles', or 'to My friends: to those men whom I chose, who have been with Me'—"Go unto my brethren, and say to them . . . my Father and your Father". He is representative of the family, of the whole. God is satisfied in the representation, and the representation is the firstfruits sheaf.

With one further word on that, we pass on. The Lord Jesus Christ, because of who He was and therefore because of what He alone could accomplish, has secured everything unto God: He has established the security of all that God is to have. He is our security unto God. Put that in another way. When the Father received that presentation of His Son at that time, He received us—all who would believe. We are not secured in the day in which we believe. We only enter into our security then by faith. We were secured at that moment when He, the sheaf of the firstfruits, presented Himself unto the Father's full satisfaction. We were secured there and then. Our security does not depend upon anything in ourselves. Through faith our security is established in Him and what He is to the Father's satisfaction. That, of course, is the very beginning, the most elementary thing in the Christian life.

#### INSTALLED AND ACCREDITED AS THE PROTOTYPE OF THE NEW CREATION

This ascending to the Father was also the installing and the accrediting of Him as the Prototype and Beginning of the new creation. Remember that His resurrection and ascension always go together—they are not two separate things. Paul puts them together in his letter to the Ephesians: "he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenlies" (Eph. i. 20). There is no space between: He is raised and

exalted in one act. That is how it is here in John xx: He will return for forty days, and then the ascension, as it is called by us, will take place—the great ascension. This resurrection-ascension was His accrediting—"declared to be the Son of God with power . . . by the resurrection from the dead"—and His installing as the Prototype and Beginning of the new creation. In His resurrection-ascension, He not only presents Himself to the Father's pleasure and is accepted to the satisfaction of God; He not only includes all who believe in Him afterward in that presentation; but He there and then becomes the Image, the Model, the Pattern, of the whole of that creation—that new creation which is coming in through faith in Him.

Jesus Christ is Man still. The New Testament Church believed that He did not let go His humanity when He went to heaven. Stephen saw the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God (Acts vii. 56). The Apostle writes: "There is one God, one mediator also between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus" (I Timothy ii. 5), and He is still mediating as Man. The whole system of Christianity hangs upon this very thing, that there is now a Man glorified to answer to God's original thought and intention. So He is now installed as God's model and pattern for the whole creation.

#### INVESTED WITH ALL AUTHORITY

Further, at that moment when He ascended to His Father, on that occasion, there was conferred upon Him all authority in heaven and earth for the great world commission. We do not get the full force of the original words in Matthew xxviii. 18. Literally, it is: "All authority has just been given to me in heaven and on earth". When He appeared before the Father, satisfying the Father and being installed as the model for the race, the new creation, all authority was then given to Him because of that satisfaction, and in His capacity as that model. "All authority . . . in heaven and on earth"—*spiritual* authority. I think sometimes we may have a little difficulty, mentally, in reconciling the fact that all authority has been given to Him and that He has been made to sit at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens and that all things are put in subjection under Him, and all the other things that are said of His lordship and His supremacy and His authority.—in reconciling this with the setbacks, the difficulties, the enemy's triumphs, as they appear to be, and all the extreme difficulty connected with the slightest degree of progress in the things of Christ. It does not seem

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to balance. But that is just our earthly way of judging. The authority of Christ is spiritual and it remains.

To condense very much into a phrase, a tremendous history into a short sentence or two, this is how it works: that if Christ ever really and truly, spiritually, comes into any place on this earth, that place can never be the same again. An issue has arisen, an eternal issue, and for all eternity the consequences of that issue, in one way or another, will be found to exist. So often it seems that, when Christ has come, when something of Christ has been brought, there is nothing to see as the result, or it seems to be just covered over and the enemy seems again to take possession; and you say, 'What was it all for? Why were those lives laid down? Why all that suffering and cost? There is nothing!' Oh, make no mistake! The authority of Christ has come there, and how often it has happened that years after, perhaps when that generation has passed away entirely, something has sprung up in that very place. That is the story of the Gospel in Japan. Something of Christ came in, in a simple way, and then it was all swamped and seemed to be drowned. But years after something was found growing, and growing, and growing, till a great thing of Christ existed. There is something that is not official authority, but a spiritual power which cannot be quenched. It will come back somehow, in some way. Paul expressed it that he was a sweet savour unto God, and that it was a matter of a savour of life unto life or of death unto death (II Cor. ii. 15 - 16). It was never neutral. The authority of Christ means that where He comes, in any form or in any way, neutrality is impossible. There will be an effect one way or the other. But that, as I said, is a very insufficient explanation of this authority, which works in many other ways.

### A GREAT DIVIDE BETWEEN TWO ORDERS

The first issue of this resurrection-ascension is that there is created a great divide between two human orders. There is the order that was and the order that is—a new order, the new human order. One order, to which all the children of Adam belong, in the resurrection of Christ is left behind in death; then there is the new human order in His resurrection in life; and there is the great divide between two humanities. That divide is planted right into the very centre of the being of every child of God, so that now there are two beings in the believer. On the one hand we are a new crea-

tion, we are of the new order, of the Christ order, there is the new kind in us. On the other hand we still carry the old order about with us—but it is a dead body. And right through all this race, that divide is established. Two orders of humanity, one in death, one in life.

To the latter, the order in Christ, the heaven is opened. That is the meaning of this resurrection-ascension. Yes, He can ascend to His Father, He can ascend right away, there is no need to wait. Immediately on resurrection He can go right through. The heaven is opened, the face of the Father is in His direction waiting to receive Him. Heaven is opened to this new order. It is closed to the old. These are facts, but they are the facts which lie at the very basis of the Christian's life.

### THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Immediately we pass from the one order to the other, from the old order to the order of Christ as God's model, from death unto life; immediately we in Christ 'present ourselves a living sacrifice', or, in other words, 'present ourselves as alive from the dead'—immediately we do that, we must understand that we enter into the school of the Holy Spirit. The great Schoolmaster takes charge. He is not a despot, but He takes charge; and there is one work to which He is committed, and that work—if we will let Him—is to teach us, to make us know the difference between these two orders: the order that lies behind and the order that now is; the order that is in death and the order that is in life: the order that has the closed heaven, and the order that has the opened heaven. And almost any hour or moment in our lives, if we are under the tuition of this great Divine Schoolmaster, the Holy Spirit, we can be having the registration in us of what is alive and what is dead unto God. It is the very nature of the Christian life. It is the very purpose for which the Lord leaves us here and deals with us as He does—to make our spirits, as alive from the dead, capable of discerning what is dead to God and what is alive to God.

### SPIRITUAL GROWTH BY THE KNOWLEDGE OF LIFE AND DEATH

That is the basis of guidance, the basis of knowing the mind of the Lord, the basis of our complete transformation—the renewing, the making over again, of our minds. It is the basis of our new intelligence. It is all governed by the laws of life and death, and our spiritual growth will be according to our ability to know, on the one hand, what



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is dead when we touch it, when we come into contact with it, to recognise what lies behind the withdrawn face of God—the Lord is not in that, the Lord is not for that, the Lord does not accept that—and on the other hand, when we meet life, to be able to say, 'Yes, I am touching life here, the Lord is in this': It is not something reasoned out; it is not the result of logical comparisons: it is something in the Spirit; it is life and death. Oh that every Christian, every young Christian, lived on this basis—not on the basis of meetings, not even on the basis of being told by others, but steadily, surely, on the basis of their own spiritual discernment and perception of what is alive and what is dead so far as God is concerned; what is left behind in His judgment, and so has to be left behind and repudiated by us; what is brought in with Christ and has to be apprehended. The difference is life and death. I think you know some of it. This is the mark of growth, but we do not grow out of it: it is always ahead of us, and it will be ahead of us to the last breath that we draw in this body.

Let me put that another way. The longer we live and go on with the Lord and know a life of fellowship with Him, walking in the Spirit, the more acute will be our sense of life and death. We shall not be overtaking this; it will always be ahead of us. The most advanced people spiritually are those who have the keenest sense of what they may and what they may not touch, and they sense it in this—life and death, death and life. You touch something at one time, even in your Christian life, and you touch it without any reaction. But touch that now and it precipitates a new crisis. You have gone on. You used to do that and have no trouble, but somehow or other you cannot touch it now. And it will always be like that.

Let us remember that death is an immense thing, a terrible thing—not merely as we know it, but as it is in this universe. Death is the greatest enemy of all that is of God, "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (I Cor. xv. 26); everything in the end of the Bible is the swallowing up of death and the curse. Death is no friend; we do not go with the poets in that. Death is a terrible enemy—it is the end of everything. Spiritual death is a very, very grim enemy indeed. And as we go on we become more acutely aware of how

great death is and how far-reaching, and therefore of how much more there is which, being death, we may not touch—even though others may because they have not reached that point of spiritual sensitiveness. It is all right to be a child while you are a child; there is nothing wrong with that; but it is wrong to be a child when you ought to be a man. God blesses the children. Do not say, These people do these things and the Lord blesses them. Of course He does; He blessed the little children. But if they go on with the Lord and grow up, they also will come to the place where they know they cannot go on with certain things any longer. If they do, they forfeit their consciousness of Divine life; something has gone. I do not say they forfeit Divine life, but they forfeit the *life* in their life, their enjoyment of it, their consciousness of it.

Do believe me, that this is true—Christ has become a standard and a different standard, a model altogether different, and the Holy Spirit has taken in hand the work of conforming us to the image of Christ. And how does He do it? Just in this way—in our own growing spiritual consciousness; and that consciousness is a matter of death or of life. How much can you corroborate? I am sure you can, up to some point; but do give heed to this word, because a very very great deal is bound up with this. "I ascend unto my Father." "I ascend." If He had explained why, He would have said, 'I ascend to be installed, accredited; placed, in the great Son-placing, as God's model and basis for you'; meaning, 'You cannot have Me on the old earthly terms; you have to apprehend Me now in a different way'.

So may we really be people who are growing. It is painful. This capacity for knowing when you touch death is a painful thing, but it is also a very blessed thing to have the capacity for knowing when you touch life. Very often you have to go round the whole dial on the Divine radio, feeling your way till you get attuned to that particular frequency and wave-length—and you touch life. As you go round that radio dial—I cannot have this, I cannot have that; you go a little further—Ah, now, this is it! The selectiveness of the Spirit in us as to Divine things bears witness in our spirits: 'This is of God!'—and there is life and there is satisfaction.

T. A-S.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

## FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

## CLIMBING EVEREST

WHAT must it feel like to be at the very highest point of the highest mountain in the world? There are only two men who can answer that question, and they are Sir Edmund Hillary and the Sherpa Tensing, who got to the top of Everest. They thrilled us all with their great victory, which seemed to come like a special gift to the Queen at her Coronation.

When *The Times* published its Everest Supplement, many turned eagerly to see the pictures and to read the story of the great climb. Even some of us who have no great interest in mountain climbing were glad enough to have the chance to learn more of the skill and courage of the two men who had suddenly become so famous.

The front page of the Supplement shows a striking picture of one of the climbers. He stands alone on the snow-covered mountain peak. Underneath are printed the simple words, "On the Summit". It is surely one of the world's most wonderful photographs. When I had looked well at it, I opened the paper with more than usual interest to follow the story of this brave man and his companion, who had fought and won their grim battle with Everest.

The story was enthralling. I found, however, that a large part of the Supplement was taken up not with them, but with the many others who had made the climb possible. There were pictures of the team of mountaineers, the leader, doctors, scientists and organizers, and much was said about their work. There was a picture not of one Sherpa only, but of numbers of them, both men and women. I read of one section of the route in which about 350 Sherpa porters were used. So although Tensing was the greatest of the Sherpas, he wasn't the only one by any means. I read also of other men who were not there, but whose work in earlier attempts had helped towards the success of this one. Some of them felt at the time that they had failed, yet even their failures were made use of. And so the story went on, proving all the time that the real secret of the triumph was the way in which so many had worked together.

Having looked at the pictures, and read the whole account, I glanced back at the advertisements, and I must say that my eyes began to open wide when I found that every one of these said that they had had a part in the expedition. There were makers of instruments and makers of tents,

makers of beds and makers of clothes and boots: all proudly claiming to have had a part in it. I even read that 'Bovril was there'. Someone else was there, too: someone who has become a famous figure to us all. It was a surprise to see him there, and one wondered if it could be possible. Had he really climbed Everest?

Well, there he was, complete with ice-pick, rope and climbing boots, clinging to the topmost peak of the range with one hand, while with the other he cheerily waved a Union Jack. His square little body was alive with excitement, as he cried out, 'I've made it!' He had climbed Everest. And who was it? Why, none other than the little sugar-man, Mr. Cube. I looked again at the first photograph of the climber alone on the summit, and then back to the drawing of Mr. Cube. How noble in his lonely glory was the first: how laughable in his claim to have 'made it' was the well-known lump of sugar. As if the Everest climb owed anything to him!

And yet it did! It owed a great deal. Whatever else the climbers might have done without, they had to have sugar. In those few moments of rest, high up on Everest, when the two famous men stopped to drink their sweetened lemonade, they probably never even gave a thought to Mr. Cube: yet it was sugar which strengthened their muscles for the work, and it was sugar which helped to keep their hearts beating firmly under the great strain of the climb.

So after all they couldn't have done without Mr. Cube. Although the quaint little figure, clinging to the top of the mountain, seemed at first sight to be nothing more than a joke, there was a sense in which he could really claim to have climbed Everest. He had played his part. I noticed in this account that great stress was laid on what is called 'team work'. And I notice, too, that the apostle Paul made much of this same truth. He was recognised by all as a marvellous servant of the Lord, but, like the man 'On the Summit', he knew only too well how much he owed to his hidden helpers. Theirs was a humble part, but it was a very important one. As sugar had given energy to the great climbers, keeping them fit and able to face the strain of their efforts, so the love and prayers of unknown Christians sustained and helped the great apostle in his upward fight for God.

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Most of us will never be prominent as servants of the Lord. It might seem as absurd to talk of our being 'On the Summit' as it looked when Mr. Cube cried out that he had 'made it', but the truth is that we are needed just as much as he was. We can strengthen the hearts of God's servants.

We can uphold them by our prayers. We must remember that we are all in a team together. That is why Paul wrote, "Ye also helping together on our behalf by your supplication" (II Corinthians 1. 11).

H. F.

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THE NEXT  
SPECIAL GATHERINGS  
at HONOR OAK

will be held, the Lord willing, on

SATURDAY, October 3, at 3.30 & 6.30 p.m.

LORD'S DAY, October 4, at 11 a.m., 3.30 & 6.30 p.m.

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LITERATURE ANNOUNCEMENTS

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IN THE PRESS

PIONEERS OF THE HEAVENLY WAY

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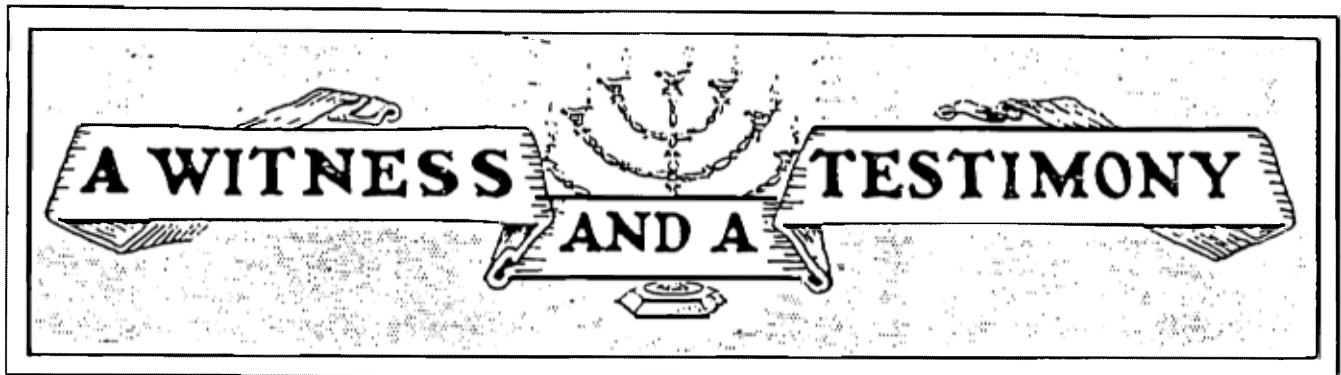
## THIS MINISTRY

THE OBJECT OF THE MINISTRY of this little paper, issued bi-monthly, is to contribute to the Divine end which is presented in the words of Ephesians iv. 13 — "... till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge (lit. full knowledge) of the Son of God, unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we be no longer children . . ."

It is not connected with any "Movement", "Organization", "Mission" or separate body of Christians, but is just a ministry to "all saints". Its going forth is with the prayer and hope that it will so result in a fuller measure of Christ, a richer and higher level of spiritual life, that, while bringing the Church of God into a growing approximation to His revealed will as to its 'attainment' it may be better qualified to be used of Him in testimony in the nations, and to the completing of its own number by the salvation of those yet to be added by the Lord.

This ministry is maintained by the Lord through the stewardship of those who value it. There is no "subscription", but gifts can be sent to the Editor, "A Witness and A Testimony", 13, Honor Oak Road, Forest Hill, London, S.E. 23, England. All cheques should be made payable to 'Witness and Testimony A/c'. The paper is sent only to those who personally desire it, and we count on friends to advise us if this is no longer the case, or if they change their address.

"Personal" letters should be addressed to Mr. T. AUSTIN-SPARKS.



NOVEMBER — DECEMBER, 1953.

Vol. 31. No. 6.

## EDITORIAL

Beloved of God,

We concluded our last Editorial on the nature and purpose of this ministry with "Perhaps more later", and here it is. Having summed up the whole matter as an undercutting of the whole of Christianity as it is now known, as a crystallized and set system and tradition, we went on to indicate that, far from having a new and separate *movement* in view or intention, it is just a matter of seeing—we believe by a deep and painful work of the Lord in us—the real and essential significance of Christ Himself. In this further part of the explanation I am going to concentrate upon that point of *seeing*, and add a little as to its inevitable consequences.

Surely we shall not find disagreement when we say that an intelligent reading of the New Testament leaves no one in doubt that a true Christian life—i. e. *true* Christianity—in the case of every *true* believer rests upon a fact with two sides. On the one side, man is totally and helplessly blind to the things of the Spirit of God, and inclusively to the Person, nature and meaning of Christ. He is just without the faculty of sight in that realm, and it requires a supernatural act of creative power to give him that faculty with its resultant knowledge. On the other side, a *true* believer, a *true* Christian, is one who is in the good of that supernatural creative miracle. Is that, or is that not, the teaching of the whole New Testament—"Gospels" and "Letters"?

There are further aspects of this matter.

One is that what is true of the natural birth is symbolic of spiritual new birth. Sight comes with birth—if the child is normal. But, while the faculty is perfect, its use and value are not. It is diffuse, uncoordinated and largely unintelligent. There comes a point at which vision becomes coordinated, focussed, and intelligence takes charge, so that the child knows the difference between things and cannot be put off with alternatives. But this faculty is capable of ever-increasing development, and things formerly undreamt of—although available—become possible of apprehension.

Another thing is that there is really no *true* substitute for sight. We may, if we are physically blind, be told of things that the seeing see; we may have them carefully and continually described to us; as things in existence we may be very familiar with them, and even take them for granted. We ourselves may go so far as to talk about them and give a description of or dissertation upon them. But the fact remains that it is all secondhand—just information, indirectly acquired.

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

Well, there you are. That position, in one or other of its aspects, is the position of literally multitudes of those who are called Christians. There are those—and they are very many—who have been born again and have the faculty of spiritual sight, but who, even after years, have the faculty neither coordinated nor developed. They still see only as babes (I Cor. iii. 1 - 2). There may be a true beginning in experience and then the acquiring of a whole mass of the common acceptance of Christian interpretation and procedure. This includes a reading and knowing of the content of the Bible without the vital revelation of its significance which makes everything in life tremendously different.

This is where we ourselves were. Our position was that of the generally accepted evangelical Christian world. All the fundamentals of the evangelical faith were most surely believed and preached. The system of denominations as 'regiments of the one army' (as it is commonly put) was accepted, or more or less taken for granted. We were in one of these 'regiments' because we believed that it was as good as—or perhaps a bit better than—the others. We had our Bible Schools and lectures, in which we gave the substance, content, and—as we believed—the meaning of the various parts of that sacred book. We were tremendously in earnest, and not a bit lacking in evangelical zeal and passion. Much more could be said about our enterprises and activities in work for God.

How the crisis came about and what led to it we should need to take all our available space to tell; suffice it to say that the main factor was a deep and growing spiritual dissatisfaction and a strengthening sense that there was something so much greater in the heart of God than we had discovered. This led to a strong quest for all that He would have us know. At length the crisis came, and that was done which answered the cry of need and revolutionised everything. As we have already said, it undercut Christianity as we had known it. That which happened was an opening of our eyes, and the immediate result was that we saw that we had hitherto never really seen. We had the doctrines, the statements, the truths, the Scriptures, and we earnestly taught them. Then the thing happened *in us*, and while the subject-matter of the Faith remained the same, we were brought into a new world of life, light, liberty and fulness, so that the *power* of the truth made all that world of difference. We date a revolutionary divide from then, as to traditional Christianity with earnest belief on the one hand, and a living experience of Christ in so much greater meaning, with an open heaven, on the other hand.

It is no new doctrine or information to say that we saw the meaning of Christ's Cross as setting aside one whole species of creation—man as we know him, even at his best and most devout—and thereby making room for another order of creation as represented by the Heavenly Man—Jesus Christ; but for that to be brought home with the mighty impact of the Holy Spirit is nothing short of shattering! Its implicates are comprehensive and all-inclusive, and its application cataclysmic! The inclusive result of such a foundational thing is to open the way for God to do things right out from Himself.

After this initial basic revelation, it was not long before the opened heaven and the opened eyes meant a seeing of the real nature of the Church. Here again institutionalism, traditionalism, denominationalism, interdenominationalism, undenominationalism (as such) just made their exit from our mentality and disappeared as part of our system of things. Indeed all such things came to be but a denial of that reality of the "One Body". But be it clearly understood that it was not even a new conception of the Church, as something in itself; it was not just another Church concept. It was a realisation of the fact that Christ—the Heavenly Man—can be neither comprehended by nor fitted into any denominator of this world, be it national, racial, ecclesiastical, temperamental, or any other of the marks which divide down here. As Christ is a new and heavenly Man, so the Church as His Body is a new and heavenly thing, *above* all sections, not *uniting* them. "There is neither . . .," says Paul, not 'There are both', or 'all'.

When this had broken upon us with such emancipating effect, and ministry related to Christ in this realm was given, we found that spiritually hungry people of various denominations were coming for food, and meeting on the ground of Christ only.

In the sovereignty of God, and without any seeking or action of ours, the issue of denominational connection was forced upon us from without, and we were compelled to face the issue of either



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abandoning our spiritual position, going back on all that the Lord had done, or of taking ground in keeping with our 'open heaven' and continuing our ministry to *all* the people of God, never raising the question of 'connections'.

This we did, but, to our amazement, while we only thought of the oneness of all true children of God, the first charge levelled against us was that of seeking to form a new sect and dividing God's people. To be quite frank, it was an almost stunning blow to discover that what had been so marked with the sovereign hand of God, so living and spontaneous, and so meeting the spiritual need of a growing number of disappointed and hungry Christians, was being looked upon by the evangelical Christian world with icy suspicion and complete misunderstanding. In our innocence and guilelessness we had never thought other than that the 'All one in Christ' position would be heartily appreciated and understood. What we did discover was that, rather than its being regarded as something which would meet a growing need, a heavy wall of ostracism, isolation, misrepresentation, and much untruth was being built around us to cut us off from fellowship and ministry. "Everywhere spoken against" is as true of us as it was of Paul's ministry, and, had it not been of God, we could not have survived these twenty-five years—much less have known an increase, expansion, and deepening—completely without a single one of the methods, recourses, and means of organized enterprise. Indeed, we have besought the Lord to bring us to an end immediately. He saw that our existence in His interest was no longer justified.

A main factor in our foundation, from the beginning, has been John ii. 19: "The Son can do nothing out from himself, but what he seeth the Father doing . . ." If that were true of Him, how much more must it be of us!

But we did not set out to try to vindicate ourselves. The part which relates to the painful disillusionment as to reactions to the effect of an opening of our eyes is really only included to lead to the point that, as it was with Paul and others, it is ever a costly and lonely way to see the heavenly as so different from and other than the earthly! So the Lord Himself found it, and to-day perhaps our surprise is that we should ever have been surprised at this. In a part of the dispensation when—because his time is shortening—the Prince of the Power of the Air is flooding the whole world with suspicion, mistrust, distortion, falsehood, and fear, it is grievous to see how this atmosphere is being breathed in by the people of God, so that more than ever relationships are affected by it. Perhaps it is here that an 'opening of the eyes of the heart' is needed, but because such a working of the "Spirit of wisdom and revelation" means so very much in the Church's ascendancy over his kingdom. Satan will take full advantage of the slightest opportunity to use suitable ground available or to create phantoms, which nevertheless are very real to those who accept them.

The focal point of this Editorial is just this. The Bible itself makes it perfectly clear that it is possible to be in possession of the Scriptures, to know them very well, even to be passionately devoted to them, and yet at the same time to be utterly and violently in contradiction to their true meaning. This was true of Saul of Tarsus. It was true of Peter at the house of Cornelius (for Leviticus xi seemed to forbid his doing what the voice from heaven demanded). It was said of those who "killed the Prince of Life" that it was because "they knew . . . not . . . the voices of the prophets which are read [in their hearing] every sabbath" (Acts xiii. 27). So we may have our Bibles and build up every contradictory position with the—seeming—support of Scripture. What is needed is "a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him": and that was prayed for by the Apostle for *believers*—not for the unsaved—and moreover for believers who had a very real "first love", namely, the Ephesians. It will cost and lead to a lonely way, requiring much courage. The Lord give us that courage.

THE EDITOR.

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

## THE RECOVERING OF THE LORD'S TESTIMONY IN FULNESS

## II THE STATE OF THE WALL

## NEHEMIAH'S ACTION

NOW from Nehemiah's concern we move on to his action—for, as we have said, Nehemiah was no detached, negative critic of the situation. He was not just one who was pointing out all that was wrong, without knowing what ought to be done for the glory of God, and doing something about it. So he took action, and if there is one book in the Bible, or at any rate in the Old Testament, which is characterized by action more than another, I think this book is such.

When Nehemiah took action, he first of all fully and accurately acquainted himself with the situation. We have such words as these:

*"Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men out of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, that were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem" (Neh. i. 2).*

And then when he came to Jerusalem, we see him moving, in these descriptive words:

*"And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God put into my heart to do for Jerusalem; neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon. And I went out by night . . . and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire" (Neh. ii. 12, 13).*

So Nehemiah took pains to get to know exactly what the situation was. It is true that he had information. Report came to him, or he made it his business to get to know from those who had first-hand knowledge, as to what the situation was, but as soon as it was possible for him to do so on the spot, he verified the report and accurately informed himself at first-hand exactly how matters stood. And I would suggest that, in like manner, when the Lord is speaking concerning the recovery of His testimony, which is the matter before us, those who are going to co-operate with Him must be accurately and fully informed. While their information may come indirectly, they must not be content with the best second-hand report, they must know at first-hand exactly how things are. You and I will never be of much use to the Lord until we know exactly what the spiritual state of things is and what needs to be done. We must really see and know this for ourselves, not just

get it from the many people there are who tell us about it.

It is a fact that we can hardly go anywhere to-day in any part of the world, without finding people deploring the spiritual state of things amongst the Lord's people. Their sense of things is in the main a right one—although, as we said earlier, many of them just complain and murmur and grumble and criticize without having anything to offer in the way of remedy and improvement. Nevertheless, their registration of the spiritual state of the Church is very largely true. It is very widely true, to-day, that everything is not right with the Church; things are not as they should be, as the Lord would have them. But we cannot go on a general—even though it be a very general—feeling that things are not right. This must come into our own being; we must know it for ourselves. I am not suggesting that we should go and try to find out all that is wrong and make a long list of all that is so defective and deplorable to-day; but I am saying this—that if we are to co-operate with God in getting things as He would have them, the matter must be a first-hand one in our own hearts. We must know it for ourselves. We must not just be professional grumblers, but those who have real travail of heart because of what we know to be the case, because of what we see, what is clear to our own eyes and what troubles our own hearts.

So Nehemiah did, in the first place, inform himself directly as to the situation. And it was a situation calculated to take the heart out of anyone. It really could have been so disconcerting that Nehemiah would not have gone on any further with it, but returned to Babylon and said: 'We must make the best of a bad job. Things are not as they ought to be, but they are quite hopeless. It is no use trying to do anything about it.' But he did not give it up as a hopeless situation, bad as it was. I am quite sure that if you had been one of the men going round with Nehemiah that night, you might well have said: 'This is something altogether beyond our handling; we will never be able to make anything of this. This is hopeless.' Nehemiah was not like that. I think Nehemiah was one of the most courageous men of the Old Testament—a true hero: faced with a terrible situation, but facing it with confidence in God, because he knew, not only that this was a bad situation, but

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that God was on the move to put it right, to make something different of it. It was God's will that it should be otherwise ; and if God wills a thing, then we have a ground of confidence, however impossible it may seem to us. So he did not give it up, but faced it—faced it squarely.

I have a very great deal in my mind that will not find expression in these messages, but I have been taking in the whole compass of the Bible in connection with this, and I am especially moving in the New Testament, as you will see as we go on. I am thinking of the Apostle Paul, the great Nehemiah of this dispensation. What a situation he had to face amongst Christians! What a condition of things he had to meet and deal with! We feel, as we read his first letter to the Corinthians, that we would have given it up and said: 'This is a hopeless mess—is this Christianity at all?' But see how Paul heroically and courageously faced that situation. He did not give them up.

To-day, we might be greatly discouraged, we might easily feel that it is not possible to have a full, clear testimony that glorifies God, seeing how the Church is destroyed, how "the wall . . . is broken down", how "the gates . . . are burned with fire"—that is, how the whole testimony is rent, and torn, and in ruins, as we might say. Yes, the situation is a disconcerting one and we have to face this question: Does God want it to be otherwise? Does God mean it to be otherwise? Is it the will of God that it shall be otherwise? Has God given it up? Is He desiring and intending—nay more, is He moving to secure a different state of things? If there is anything to prove that God is actively concerned about this matter, then we dare not abandon it. But it takes a great deal of courage, all the courage that God can give us, to face the present situation. Those who know it know that I am not exaggerating.

#### THE VISION AND INSPIRATION OF NEHEMIAH

And then, once more, in his action Nehemiah brought others into his vision and into his concern. First of all, it was in his own heart and it was hidden in his heart. He said nothing to anyone of what God had put on his heart. It was something between himself and the Lord, in the first place, and it was not until he had reached a certain position, and made a certain decision consequent upon his investigation, that he opened his heart to others. I think that is a splendid thing, a thing of which to take note. It is so easy to have ideas and then to begin to broadcast your ideas and unload them

on to other people. It is quite another thing, between yourself and God, to have got to grips with the situation and become fully impressed with the greatness of it, and then to resolve that this thing must be done and to bring others into your vision and inspiration.

You see, Nehemiah was made to be a tremendous inspiration. You read through this book and see what you might almost call the magnetism of this man's personality, the inspiration that he was. People leapt to the impossible under the inspiration and vision of this man. There were times when they were very low in despondency, but then he pulled them out of their slough. What a force he was as a true leader to bring others into his vision! And do you not feel strongly that that is the real need to-day—of people who have vision, who have weighed up everything, who have faced the whole issue, and then who have such confidence in God, with the assurance that God wants and means something different, that they have come out with their positive impact upon others, so that others come into line? That truly is a great need. It is the easiest thing in the world to be a passenger, always to be carried. Ah, it is so easy to be a parasite, just living on and draining others. But it is quite another thing to be an inspiration, to be one who really does help others into the thing that God is after, to be an inspiration to them to come along to help in the work of the Lord. Nehemiah was that ; and I put it to you that if we have any sense of things being other than according to God's mind, and that God would have them as He would have them, we ought to be positive people in this matter, and be an inspiration to others about it.

And so Nehemiah, having taken the full measure of it, and having weighed it all up, and having impressed himself with the greatness of the task in hand, without despairing, turned to it and so inspired the other men to whom he opened his heart that they said: "Let us rise up and build". Oh, for a people like that! A people to-day who know all about it, and, seeing how things are, will say: 'Let us do something about it—let us rise up and build!'

Well, that is the beginning of his action, and you will agree that that is action indeed. Of course, we are not just looking at this as a human matter, because none of us can be like this for very long, at any rate not unless we are energized by the Spirit of God. Consider the Apostle Paul again, who knew all about it, all about the conditions, and knew how discouraged and despondent the people of God could be about the situation. His prayer was this: "that he would grant you, ac-



## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

ording to the riches of his glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man" (Eph. iii. 16); "that ye may be . . . strengthened with all power, according to the might of his glory, unto all patience and long-suffering with joy" (Col. i. 9, 11). The mighty energies of the Spirit of God inwardly are the only energies by which we shall be able to go on. We must allow a large place for the inward working of God in the life of Nehemiah, because we know full well that only so can we do anything about this situation.

## THE OBJECT—THE WALL

Now let us come to the main features of the whole matter of this book. We said, in our first study, that they are three: namely, the Wall, the Work and the Warfare, or the Object, the Conduct and the Conflict. We begin with the object, the Wall, and we must be very clear as to what is represented by this wall that Nehemiah was going to repair—what the wall stands for. May I say three preliminary things about the wall, as to what the wall really was and what it is now.

First of all, the wall was a *definition*: that is, it defined. A definition: that means, spiritually interpreted—interpreted in our own time, according to Divine thoughts—a clear defining of what is Christ and what is not Christ. That wall of Jerusalem defined a certain area, a certain territory; and it stood there originally to say: 'Now, what is within this wall, this mark, is of a certain order, of a certain character; within this, things are so and so.' Of course, the character was given by the temple, right there at the centre, so to speak: but the wall was a defining factor, and we need not stay with detail about that. It is only necessary for us to say that in the recovering and completing of the Lord's testimony there is the necessity for clear definition of what is of Christ and what is not. Things have become terribly confused. Here the wall is broken down and there is much rubbish. I am going to deal with the rubbish presently, but here is the fact—much rubbish where the wall had been. Multitudes of people to-day have no clear discernment, perception or apprehension as to what is Christ and what is merely 'Christianity'. In evangelical Christianity things have become terribly mixed up, and what is necessary, it is evident, is the reconstituting of that which clearly and exactly defines what Christ is: that Christ shall be clearly understood and known and all the confusing and complicating and mixing elements shall be eliminated.

The wall was a defining thing. That means, spiritually, that it stands to represent the real character of Christ. I said a few pages earlier that there is very much behind what I am saying that cannot now find expression, but I have been thinking about walls—looking at walls in general through the Bible and passing from all the historic walls to the great inclusive wall at the end of the book of the Revelation, the wall of the New Jerusalem; and I find amongst other things that a wall is to define the character or nature of what is within. That is true, is it not, of the great wall of the New Jerusalem at the end of the Bible? Its main feature, we may say, is its character: its glory, its beauty, its purity. It is the character of Christ that is the first thing about His testimony, and that has to become established and very clearly defined.

And then—you may think that this is a distinction without a difference, but there *is* a difference—the wall represented a *demarcation*, that is, a distinction. Here things are not mixed at all; here at the wall there is a declaration, and an establishment of the fact, that this testimony is a distinctive testimony. It is not a general thing; it is not something that brings into itself all sorts of different things. It is clear; it is distinctive. It has one thing to say, and that one thing is: 'Only what is of Christ can pass this, can be within this'.

Now that is very, very searching, and very arresting. We shall find as we go on that this brother of Nehemiah's, Hanani, was eventually made a policeman. And he, as policeman, was in charge of the gates, to deal with intruders, with merchants—and there are plenty of merchants finding their way into the testimony of Jesus, who have their own interests to serve, their own business to do, and all sorts of merchandise to bring into the confines of God, of Christ. And this wall said, 'No!' You read on to the end of the book, and see how Nehemiah and his policeman dealt with the merchants! They were having none of that—they chased them, they used strong measures with the merchants. But they did not do any more than the Lord Jesus did with the merchants of His day, with His knotted cord. No, the simple word is this: the wall spoke of a distinction between the precious and the vile; and that is covering much ground: it puts very much between what is of the Spirit of God and what is of another spirit.

And in the third place, this wall represented a *defence*. It was something which was placed as it were in a position of responsibility. It was responsible to protect the Lord's interests and the Lord's people from that which would invade, which would

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attack, which would corrupt, which would change the character. The Lord needs a testimony which challenges everything, a testimony which will not let anything pass that is not wholly of the Lord. That is where things have gone wrong with the Church, with the people of God, with the Lord's interests. So much has been allowed to creep in, to have a place, that is not of the Lord, and there has not been a sufficiently strong testimony to what is of the Lord to meet it.

Again, in your New Testament you find that at the beginning, when the spiritual wall was first built, it was such a strong, clear thing in the power of the Holy Spirit, that first of all there were many that durst not join themselves—they *durst not*, they were afraid. The situation was such that fear was created in the heart where things were not right with God. On the other hand, people coming in fell down on their faces and said: 'God is in the midst of you'. The Lord needs a testimony like that, does He not?—something so clear, so strong, that those who do not mean business with God are afraid, and in our common expression, just 'clear off'. "They went out . . . that they might be made manifest that they all are not of us" (I John ii. 19), and that is a very healthy sign. Things are in a good condition when that happens. Ah, yes, but when things are in a bad condition you are afraid to lose anybody—you hold on to anybody. The Lord said: 'No; don't try to hold on to everybody, don't try to bring in everybody'. This testimony, this wall, is a defence, a protection against *anybody, anything*. How necessary it was to Jerusalem in Nehemiah's day! The whole book shows that. You look at these other people, and see what this wall meant to Tobiah and to the rest of the company. They knew the implications of this wall; they knew that they were not getting into this.

Well, that is the meaning of the wall in the first place. But let us go just a little further in the matter. The wall represents Christ on two sides. On the one side, it represents Christ outwardly to the people of the world and the nations. On the other side, it represents what Christ is to the Lord's own people themselves. In a phrase, the wall is a testimony in fulness to the Son of God: what the Son of God means, as seen in this world, to the world and to the people of God.

#### THE NEED FOR REPAIRING THE WALL

It is necessary that I should put in a word here, lest there should be a misapprehension of our meaning. Nehemiah was not building the entire

wall all over again from the foundations. If you look closely, you will see that it is the *repairing* of the wall that is going on, the repairing and making complete of what had been broken down. Why do I say that? Well, it is not given to us, we are not called upon, to build this thing from the foundations. Thank God, the foundation was laid, and thank God, the wall was built, in the beginning. The book of the Acts shows the wall, the testimony, in fulness and completeness, and in glory and strength and grandeur: a mighty defence, a mighty revelation of Christ to the nations and a mighty meaning of Christ to His own people. It was there at the beginning. Nehemiah did not come to commence, to initiate this thing. He came to a scene where what had once been full, clear, perfect, was broken down, ruined, and his work was to repair it and make it complete again; and that is where we are. If we are called into anything, we are called into *that*. We are not called upon to do what the Apostles did. They did their work, and it stands; but since their time there has been a good deal that speaks of the conditions of Nehemiah's day—a good deal of collapse, of breakdown, of disintegration and of spoliation; and the Lord calls in to recover, to recover what was. That, surely, is the work to which we are called.

So we look first of all at the wall in brokenness. Here it is: "*Then said I unto them, Ye see the evil case that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach*" (Neh. ii. 17). The last word touches the spot, does it not? See the great enemy of God, of Christ, of the testimony of our Lord, having it as his one abiding object to bring reproach upon the Name of the Lord—anyhow, by any means, whether by direct assault or by subtle underworking; somehow to bring the Lord's Name and testimony into reproach. "*That we be no more a reproach*". What a motive to govern the people of God, to save the Lord and His people from the reproach of this broken-down condition!

#### IDOLATRY THE CAUSE OF THE BROKEN-DOWN CONDITION

We must, before we can move to the recovery, examine and trace the fundamental and ultimate reason for this state of things. We are taking our cue from the illustration in this book and in the other books leading up to it. There is one word that goes to the root of the whole matter, and that word is *idolatry*. If you look at the wall in its ruins, its wreckage: if you meditate and contemplate and

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ask questions—'Why? Why this? How is it that this is come about? What are the reasons for this state of things?'—the inclusive and fundamental answer is—idolatry.

Is it not very impressive to recognise that, because of the idolatry in Israel, the nation was sent to the very heart of idolatry to be cured of it? Babylon was the world centre of idolatry—you know that from the great image set up. Now Israel had allowed idolatry in her midst, and the Lord sent her to the world centre of idolatry to be cured of idolatry. I say that it is impressive, and it just means this: that sometimes the Lord's way of curing is to give an overdose of the thing with which we flirt. They hankered and they flirted. The prophets cried, pleaded, wept, appealed, agonized, that the people would break with this thing, cease their flirtations with the gods of the heathen nations round about them: but they would not; they were wedded. 'All right', said the Lord; 'have what you are after—have it to the full': and indeed they had it to the full, and it cured Israel of idolatry in that form for the rest of their history. I am not saying that it cured them of the spirit of idolatry; we shall see that later. But that form of open complicity with the power of evil was destroyed by their being given that upon which their hearts were set.

Here is the extreme instance of the working of a certain law. The Psalmist said about Israel in the wilderness: "And he gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul" (Psalm cvi. 15). They refused to let go. They would have; they said 'yes' in the face of God's 'no'. 'We will have'. 'All right', said the Lord—and they were the losers in their getting.

Now that principle does work, you know, and I am not so sure that it is not working to-day. In the Church, in Christianity, the world has found its place. The Church of God went out to the world and brought the world in. There has been complicity with the spirit of this world, it has found a large place in Christianity; and while it is not my desire to speak in this way, we must be very faithful. Perhaps all unperceived, all unrecognised—God grant that it is so—even in evangelical Christianity, there is a good deal of worldly principle, the bringing in of unspiritual things—names, titles, resources and what not, to do the work of God. There is a hidden complicity to get favour, to get advantage; there is behind all that another spirit—the spirit of idolatry—which is getting a grip upon the Lord's people. Very well: what has happened? The Lord has let the Church have what it wants, and to-day it is feeling that it has lost its

power, lost its position, because the world has too much of a place. In its gaining it has lost: that is very patent, is it not?

That principle works—and mark you, it works personally too, if your heart is so set upon something that you will not take 'no' from the Lord; you insist, you will have it; and your threat to the Lord, even if it is not put in the form of a threat, is that unless the Lord gives you that, or does that for you, you are not going on. If there is anything like that, the Lord will give it to you, He will let you have it. It will be a curse to you. Abraham did that over Ishmael—and what a curse! You see, there is the principle. Now the point is this, that these people allowed idolatry to come into their lives, in spirit and in principle; and the Lord, through His prophet, "rising up early", appealed; but they refused to listen to the voice of the prophet, so the Lord said: 'All right, have what you want—away to Babylon!' They lost everything.

What is idolatry? If it is not bowing down to idols of wood and stone, it takes many, many subtle forms, and very often indirect ways. It is just heart communion with anything that takes God's place, that gets in God's way. What a lot of ground that covers! The ultimate effect is that the Lord is frustrated, the Lord is hindered, the Lord cannot have what He is after. That is idolatry in principle. It displaces the Lord, it makes difficulties for the Lord.

I said earlier that, although Israel was cured of that outer form of idolatry, the principle or spirit of idolatry was not eradicated: for in the days of our Lord they were worshipping tradition—and tradition can be an idol. Yes, tradition can be an idol: you can be so committed and devoted to tradition that the Lord does not have a chance. It obstructs the Lord's way, like the rubbish that Nehemiah could not pass—the beast that he rode could not pass the rubbish. Very often the rubbish in the Lord's way is the rubbish of a dead tradition, of a dead history, something that belongs to the past and is not alive now. That is the principle of idolatry. That was the fundamental and ultimate cause of the brokenness of the wall, the wreckage, the rubbish, the debris: idolatry, heart union and communion with that which is not of the Lord.

Remember that this book of Nehemiah is full of bad conditions, of evils and errors, and these things correspond to the state of the wall. I want you to get this, although I shall come back to it again. You look at that wall and examine it, and you can look through it, so to speak; and in looking through you see that the conditions of the Lord's people tally exactly with the condition of the wall.



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There are all sorts of wrongs and evils and errors, and that is the rubbish, that is the broken-down state of things. You see, the people's state corresponded to the state of the wall; the wall was just an illustration of spiritual conditions: so that when you come to 'look through' this wall, you find that what you are dealing with really is not a wall, but spiritual conditions; and as Nehemiah went forward to deal with the wall, he found that he had at the same time to deal with spiritual conditions in the people. They were one and the same thing. It would in effect be foolish to put up a beautiful wall when the conditions behind the wall were a contradiction. You see the point? The two

things must be consistent—the spiritual state and your testimony. The testimony must have a spiritual condition behind it. A spiritual condition must support the testimony. You cannot work upon building up something that is not in the energy of truth.

We shall see further what the wall means, and what the wall is made of; but for the time being, the Lord bring us into His own vision, into His own intention, and energize us with the same energy as that which possessed His servant Nehemiah and His servant Paul, and many others whom He has used to recover something more of the testimony of His Son.

T. A-S.

## VISION AND FAITH

### I. THE NEED FOR VISION

*Reading: II Timothy ii. 1 – 13.*

*"Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, of the seed of David, according to my gospel." (II Tim. ii. 8).*

WHEN the apostle wrote II Timothy, he had reached the end of his earthly life. Of all the many letters which he wrote, this must have been among the last. So far as the New Testament is concerned this is undoubtedly Paul's last message. The writer was aware of this fact, for he affirmed: *"I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come"* (II Tim. iv. 6). The shadows were deepening over all that was earthly, as the apostle surveyed the scene in the light of eternity. For Timothy this must have been a precious message; one whose every sentence deserved to be carefully and solemnly weighed. As he read on, eager to give heed to this last great message, he came to the appeal, *"Consider what I say . . ."*, and then: *"Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, of the seed of David"*. Remember Jesus Christ! Why had Paul written this? The reader could not pass quickly on, as though this were a simple reminder not to forget his Lord. It must mean more than appeared on the surface. It needed much careful and prayerful thought.

#### A SUPREME VISION

Paul was on the brink of eternity; as never before he was beginning to see all things as God sees them. *"I charge thee"*, he wrote, *"in the sight of God, and of Christ Jesus, who shall judge*

*the living and the dead"* (iv. 1); and again, *"the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day"* (iv. 8). As he looked back over his long and eventful course, he recollected that it had all begun with an overwhelming vision of the Risen Christ. He knew that eternity's verdict upon his life would be decided by the measure in which it had been inspired and governed by that heavenly vision. If he had any regrets at all, they would be for the moments when he had failed to remember the meaning and implications of that supreme vision. More than ever before, he was convinced that this central and dominating vision of the Lord in glory had been the secret of a spiritually effective life. His great concern, then, was to urge Timothy and those of us who, like him, want to be good soldiers of Jesus Christ, never to fail in this matter. *"Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead"*. Make it the supreme rule of life always to be governed by personal submission to and faith in the Risen Lord.

Happy is the man who can contemplate his past life and ministry with the sure knowledge that he has been on the right path. The apostle had that satisfaction. He had been right! Many arguments and influences had sought to deflect him from this narrow way. All too many of his earlier colleagues had departed from it: all too few of the Lord's servants had consistently been ruled by this one consideration. But he had kept the faith, and that was because he had never lost the vision. Vision and faith go together. How he longed that in the days to come, others might follow him, as

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he had followed his Lord. He knew that if he were able to send back a message from the grave, his supreme appeal from eternity would be that Timothy might continue to understand and accept the meaning of Jesus Christ, risen from the dead and exalted to the Throne of heaven.

## ETERNAL VALUES

The appeal was not intended to make Timothy a visionary in a wrong way, for it served as introduction to many practical matters. The rest of the letter is occupied with instructions and warnings which show us what a busy and responsible man Timothy had become. Paul was not requiring him to leave these cares that he might spend all his time in contemplating the Lord. Nor was he suggesting that Timothy should have periodic breaks in order to think only of the Lord, as though the vision were to be a matter of occasional happy hours of meditation. The force of the exhortation in this context is to urge Timothy that in the midst of all his varied ministry he should always maintain a supreme, dominating vision. There were all kinds of practical issues, bound to arise continually, but it was important not to be preoccupied with them as things in themselves, but to bring them into right relationship with the one, constant, governing vision of the heavenly Lord. From his vantage point between time and eternity, Paul could see so clearly that eternal values are those which have direct relation to the exalted Christ. They, and they alone, really matter. Anything which has no vital connection with Him is of much less importance than it seems. There are concerns which can occupy all our attention, and yet if the Lord returned in glory at this moment, they would not matter at all. Perhaps even now they would seem petty and unimportant, if we saw them in relation to Christ in glory. They just would not matter. Yet even the smallest detail which has any vital connection with His exaltation will go on mattering throughout eternity. It is all a question of lasting values, and that is why the apostle begs us never to lose sight of our Risen Lord.

## VESSELS UNTO HONOUR

We need not limit to this life the promise of being "*a vessel unto honour, sanctified, meet for the master's use*" (ii. 21), for God's "great house" is an eternal one. Indeed the very description of these vessels as being "of gold and silver" suggests not only their preciousness but also their durability. The values which matter most are those

which will abide; not the passing things which seem good to us at the moment, nor those which attract men's praise for a little while, but the solid and lasting worth which can be of real use to God in eternity. Our vision of Christ will keep this ever in view. Even here on earth, He lived for eternity. All the good of His earthly life had lasting qualities, and He took it all with Him to the glory. The values which we shall take with us into eternity will be measured by that which is truly of Him in us now. That, and no more than that, has lasting worth.

But we are not able to discriminate in such matters. We can easily be mistaken. We dare not accept the values which are popular or current among men, for they may be false. If we are to be sure of lasting values we need constantly to be checked up by heaven's verdict. This is implied in Paul's command to maintain the heavenly vision, to keep in wholehearted submission to our risen Lord. We cannot discriminate, but He can and does. It is for us to live our lives in the light of His presence.

## A SAFEGUARDING VISION

How important it is that our spiritual position should be safeguarded! This can never be achieved by precautions which we can take; no statements of faith, no solemn promises, no rules of life, no articles of association, can guarantee that our spiritual usefulness will be maintained in full strength. The outward forms may remain, without a corresponding inner life.

Even the inward life by the Spirit needs some strong and steady government to keep it safe and balanced. There is no question about the importance of a powerful experience of the indwelling Spirit. Paul had already laid great emphasis upon this need in the life of the servant of God. "*Stir into flame*", he urged, "*the gift of God, which is in thee . . .*" (i. 6, R. V. mg.); and again, "*The good deposit, guard through the Holy Spirit . . .*" (i. 14). Yet the apostle was aware of the fact that such a concern, if wrongly emphasized and unbalanced, could itself become a danger. It is never a healthy sign when we become over-occupied with that which is inward, in a self-conscious way. The Spirit has not come to make us something in ourselves but to keep us in the closest association with the Lord in heaven. Even in our spiritual exercises, we can so easily become unbalanced—we can become so obsessed about our own need of heart holiness as somehow to get out of touch with the living Lord. Perhaps this is why Paul added the

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further injunction to "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead"; we are always safe if our governing vision is that of Christ on high.

The Corinthians were very much taken up with their inward experiences of the Spirit, their knowledge and their gifts, their enthusiasm and their own attainments. They were, however, a carnal and undisciplined people, self-centred to a degree, and very unbalanced in certain matters. What they needed was a new governing vision of Christ Jesus as Lord; this alone could make them safe.

#### DELIVERANCE FROM DOUBT

In any case, we shall certainly meet with such fierce attacks upon our faith that we dare not base everything upon our own personal experience. Paul wrote for the last days, the days when faith should be assaulted in every possible way, so that even the elect would need particular help from God to maintain their integrity and strength. The one absolutely fixed point upon which faith may settle, and which will provide a sure anchor in every tempest, is the fact of the unchanging Christ. It is perhaps for this reason that Paul declared: "*If we are faithless, he abideth faithful; for he cannot deny himself*" (ii. 13). "If we are faithless"—or, to put it another way, if we are involved in doubts and questions about our experience of the Lord within—that does not make the slightest difference to the Lord on the throne. Our condition may be largely one of imagination; it may be temperamental or circumstantial; but even if it is real, heaven has not failed, God's purposes are not frustrated. Our spiritual position does not depend first of all upon our ability to stir ourselves up, but upon vital communication with our victorious Lord in heaven. Without being in the least careless about our own spiritual state, we must get things in their right perspective. In other words, we must remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead.

#### OUR LINK WITH HEAVEN

The simplest form of fountain has no mechanical aids at all. It consists of a pipe running down from a tank which is situated in a lofty position. The lower end of the pipe has a nozzle, which is made to point up into the air. The jet or fountain of water is governed by the downward flow from the tank, through the pipe. The water comes down from a height, and so long as it is confined within a pipe it tends naturally to seek its own level again. It is certainly necessary to keep the pipe clear, for

a way must be kept open through which the water can flow. But the real factor is not only the cleanliness of the pipe, but the elevated position of the main body of water. This is a simple parable. All the exhortations as to our inward state, and faith exercise relating to it, are like the incidental, though very important, task of keeping the pipeline clear. The greatest need, though, is to have that clean pipeline linked on to the main supply. However clean it is, the fountain can struggle and strain to produce the power of uprising water, but all will be in vain if it is not properly connected with the tank. And so with us: the life is not stirred up from within in the first place; it flows down from on high. The secret of fulness in the life is faith's link with the fulness of the heavenly Lord. It is, of course, a solemn matter to be in vital connection with Christ in the glory. The implications are tremendous; the demands very searching. It means that He really must be Lord of all. But it is the only way of knowing full salvation.

"Remember Jesus Christ". Paul might have put it in this way: 'Remember those times when you have allowed Him to go out of sight—remember them, that they may never be repeated. Think of the unhappy experiences, the contradictions, the weakness and the failure that have resulted from even a brief losing sight of Him. Whenever faith has ceased to keep the throne of His glory in view, there has always been defeat. This vision is a safeguarding one'.

#### A COSTLY VISION

We have already hinted that this is a costly vision. The rest of the letter will make this abundantly clear. Paul had remained true to the original heavenly vision, and kept it as the rule of his life—but only at great cost. He had indeed suffered hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. He had only been able to come through the fierce tests in triumph because he was able always to keep the glorious outcome in view, and it is for this reason that he added the words: "*of the seed of David*".

We may ask why he thus described Christ. If it were only to emphasize the humanity of the Lord, to point out that it was a true Man who was in the throne, he might have called Jesus 'of the seed of Adam', or even better, 'of the seed of the woman'. If he had wished to emphasize the faith which always characterized the Lord, he might have described Him, as he had done elsewhere, as 'of the seed of Abraham'. Why did he single out David in this way?



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Surely because it was David who had to endure so much hardness before he was finally crowned. David did not easily inherit his throne; he only came to it through much tribulation, and after very much patience. And how much more is this so in the case of the Lord Jesus! We do not look away to the glory to see there a Man who had everything made easy for Him, One whose circumstances all assisted Him and whose every difficulty was smoothed away for Him as a matter of course. If we did, we should feel that our experience was so different from His that there must be something wrong with us. Indeed there are times when we do feel like this, and so are stumbled by the hardness of the way and by the apparent lack of signs of God's favour. The only way out of such trouble is by a new vision of Christ as "of the seed of David".

Is it not strange that we so often have wrong ideas about the way to the throne? Most of us at some time, and some of us almost all the time, make such mistakes about what it means to have a life in union with heaven. We expect all sorts of proofs that will satisfy the flesh and give us comfort, whereas the apostle reminds us that it is only "if we endure" that we shall also reign. In chapter iii he enlarges on the circumstances of "the last days", with a definite emphasis on the great cost of faithfulness. There can be no easy or popular way to the throne. It may be good to have a vision of Christ preaching to the multitudes, working miracles, healing the sick and being acclaimed and loved by grateful followers. But this would be a very partial and incomplete vision. It was not the Sermon on the Mount, not the feeding of the five thousand, and not the miracles of healing which He wrought, that took Him to the throne. It was the Cross which did that. If Timothy could remember this, it would keep him steady when he was beset by fierce temptations to doubt; it would also help him to remain loyal to his unpopular friend, Paul, from whom most people were now turning away.

Why was it that no man stood with Paul? Why was it that Demas and other former fellow-workers forsook him? Why was it that the apostle almost had to beg his own spiritual son not to be ashamed of him? It was because Paul was following his Master in the way of the Cross, and that way is always unpopular and most costly. They

had taken their eyes off the great "Seed of David". They were looking at Paul, at other Christian leaders, at "this present world", at "the mouth of the lion", and so they were either ashamed or afraid. And so shall we be. The only safe way of facing all the cost and conflict of the last days is to keep the Risen Christ always before us, and to have in constant remembrance how He came to His present exaltation in the throne.

## AN UP-TO-DATE VISION

'Never forget Jesus Christ'. Fancy saying that to Timothy! Although Paul called him his child, he was in fact a mature man and a servant of God of many years' standing. He was not likely to forget his Saviour. Of course, Paul meant far more than that. He was urging Timothy to keep in view the great truth concerning Jesus Christ "of the seed of David", namely that He lives in the mighty power of resurrection. Not only that He is alive, but that He has triumphed over death. This is fundamental and central. It is not only an external vision, but an inner power, for all the Spirit's work within us is based on this principle of resurrection.

There is much that needs to be done in us if we are to be effectual servants of God. We need to be exercised about our inner life. We need to be watchful of the enemy. But the central and most important matter is to maintain a vital and up-to-date relationship with the Lord in heaven. All victory and fruitfulness spring out of this. This is our first responsibility. If we keep our eyes on Christ, He will attend to our need for power within and will also deliver us from the enemies round about.

For Timothy it would need a great spiritual effort to keep this vision clear. It would be only too possible that, with Paul being taken away, and with evil finding new manifestations, he would tend to be distracted. He might even become so occupied with his new and heavy responsibilities as to look too much at them and not enough at his Lord in heaven. For these and other reasons, Paul's call must have been a very timely one. It is not less so for us. Surely we must actually be in the "grievous times" which he said would come in the "last days" (iii. 1). At all costs we must keep fresh and central our heavenly vision of Christ.

H. F.

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRIST

### VI IN RELATION TO SPIRITUAL SIGHT

*Reading : Mark x. 46 - 52.*

#### THE WHOLE RACE IN ADAM BORN BLIND

WHAT is in view here is the question of sight. In our earlier meditations we were occupied with the matter of seeing the face of God. In different ways we have sought to show that, in Adam's sin in the garden and his unholy attempt to see what God had hidden from him—hidden from him, as it proved afterward, in great love and mercy—in his unholy grasping after that seeing, Adam lost his sight, and the whole race in him has been born blind, blind as to the face of God. The race has, deep down in its very constitution, a cry and a sigh. Although it is not expressed in words, or understood for what it really is, it amounts to this: 'If only we could see the face of God—if only we knew that God's face was toward us!' The Son of Man came into the world, and He said, "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke xix. 10). One of the great things that was lost was that sight, that conscious enjoyment, of the face of God.

As with all blindness, when that loss occurred, a whole world, a very wonderful world, was lost, was closed, was shut up. The reality of things, things as they really are in that world, was understood no longer. It is a very wonderful thing when anyone who has never seen receives sight—when something is done by an operation to give sight. What a wonderful new world! It had been a world of surmise, of imagination, of ever straining to understand, to know, and now that whole world is suddenly opened up. What a wonderful day! Sight is a marvellous thing; but if this is true in the natural realm, it is infinitely more true in the spiritual.

When we were in America a few years ago, we met our dear old friend Mrs. Lemmel, who wrote the chorus:

"Turn your eyes upon Jesus,  
Look full in His wonderful face,  
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim  
In the light of His glory and grace."

Mrs. Lemmel was practically blind; she had to be led everywhere. But she was fulfilling a marvellous ministry. Because she was blind, hosts of

people were visiting her, thinking, perhaps, to console or befriend her; but she was ministering Christ to them, and it was they who were getting all the benefit and the blessing. Then a surgeon offered to perform an operation with a practical certainty that he could restore her sight. She weighed this up before the Lord in prayer for a long time; and then, she told us, 'I decided not to have the operation: by my blindness many are seeing what they would never see if I had my natural sight; I have chosen that they should see that greater world than the natural sight can see'. Well, that was a noble decision; but my point is that to her the seeing of the things of the Spirit, the things of heaven, the things of God, infinitely transcended the having of her natural sight.

#### CHRIST CAME TO RECOVER LOST SIGHT

Oh, yes, there is a world—a world that God wants us to see, in the light, glory and fulness of which He wants us to live, ever making fresh discoveries of what is there. He wants us to have eyes that can see the tremendous values of His own eternal things. Yes, the value and importance of spiritual sight is so great that the very Son of Man came from heaven to recover it—"to save that which was lost". It was a very costly thing, in heaven's estimation, that kind of knowledge. If we want further confirmation of it, we have only to take account of how fiercely and maliciously the enemy fights against the people of God coming into any further knowledge of God's eternal thought, or of any soul being enlightened as to its salvation. How bitterly the enemy contests that! You know something of that; I need not dwell upon it. I am simply saying that from heaven's standpoint there is a tremendous value bound up with this question of sight.

As with all others mentioned in the Bible, this man about whom we have read is not there just by chance, as something that just happened in the way. They are all here in the sovereign orderings and movements of God; they were moved into these positions to stand out as examples, parables and indications of great spiritual things. This man Bartimaeus comes before us in connection with something more than his natural sight. It is a parable of what Jesus has come to do for blinded sons of Adam. The crowd surged, he heard the

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tramping of their feet, the feet of the multitude, and asked what it was all about—'Who is it?' And they said that it was Jesus of Nazareth who was passing by.

Jesus of Nazareth. I think that name and the word "Nazareth" bring Him very near to us. It was a place of no great importance and of no very high reputation. It represents something very ordinary, common, without repute, without honour, without glory, and Jesus has in history become associated with Nazareth. Jesus of Nazareth—how often He was called that. But you see, it is Jesus of Nazareth. There were, I expect, thousands of Jesuses in Palestine. There had been thousands of Jesuses in the history of Israel. Jesus—Jeshua, Joshua, Hoshea—was a very common name. And God came right into the midst of that which was common and humble and degraded and said, "Thou shalt call his name JESUS". Oh, surely He ought to have a better name than that—He ought to be more distinguished than that! But with God the name given to Jesus meant what it did mean. "*Thou shalt call his name JESUS; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins*" (Matt. i. 21).

Nazareth—"Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John i. 46)—Jesus of Nazareth. You see the point. It is Jesus touching the depth of human degradation, coming right into association with our fallen humanity, into touch with that which has lost its Divine significance. Jesus—'Jehovah saves', 'the Lord saves'—that is the meaning of the name. But look at all the Jesuses of Israel's history and see how many of them were saviours. No, the name has lost its value and meaning. It was everywhere but it meant nothing. Here the name has recovered its meaning, come right down into the midst of that which needed saving, as represented by or typified in Nazareth and in all the other Jesuses who needed saving. He had to go right down into that, in closest touch with our poor, fallen humanity, in order to save. Jesus of Nazareth.

This man heard that. Oh, it is wonderful; there is so much in that answer of the Lord to him. "Thy faith hath made thee whole." This man knew where Jesus came from, but he believed that He was something more than an ordinary Jesus, an ordinary earthly association. He was more than that, and he cried out, "*Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me*" (Mark x. 47). They tried to silence him, to sit on him, to make him be quiet, and he cried out so much the more. "Jesus . . . have mercy on me". They commanded him to hold his peace.

## THE NEED FOR VIOLENCE ON OUR PART

There are two things in that connection that are, I think, very clear and obvious. One is this, that this wonderful blessing of an open heaven, that we have been talking about—this recovery of the face of God, this entering into that world of Divine fulness, this apprehending of the thoughts of God which means so much—is not just going to happen to us while we sit passively, hoping something will happen. The Lord Himself said, "*The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and men of violence take it by force*" (Matt. xi. 12). This man had entered into that spirit. He had inwardly perceived what a tremendous thing it would be to have his eyes opened. And if you are concerned about a "spirit of wisdom and revelation", "the eyes of your heart being enlightened"—if this to you is of any concern at all, you will not be passive about it. You will get on your knees, and say, 'Now, Lord this has got to be made good'. You will cry and cry aloud. Are you doing that? It is not enough for us to attend meetings and hear things said, whether they be more or less wonderful, and just think that we have got it. We have not got it, and a very great deal of the failure of so much ministry to have a real outworking is because we do not go at once to the Lord and say, 'Now, Lord, I have heard that: mentally I know it, I am informed about it; but that thing has got to become a living revelation in my inner man'. I have to see it, and I can only see it by a Divine touch, by the finger of God, by a miracle from heaven.

We shall never see Divine things by the aid of our reason. We shall never see things because they are put plainly to us by the one who ministers. No, it will only be as Jesus of Nazareth comes into touch with us and we with Him. And that applies to every stage of the Christian life.

If there are any reading these lines, who have never in the first place had their eyes opened to see, so that the result is life eternal—for knowing is only another word for seeing, and Jesus said, "This is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ" (John xvii. 3): "that they should know"—another word for seeing—if you have not yet entered into life, received eternal life, remember that it will not just happen to you; it will not simply happen. You will have to become tremendously concerned about this and show the Lord that you mean business; you will have to be like Bartimaeus, cry, and 'so much the more', cry. Remember that the Lord does so often wait, delay, hold off, to see if we really place value upon this



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seeing. We are tested as to how much we esteem His things.

Here is a man of great possessions, called a rich young ruler. It was not that the Lord wanted him to become a philanthropist and give away his money. It was the question: 'Do you value eternal life more than all your worldly possessions? Let us see! What value do you put upon eternal life, upon having your blind eyes open? Do you cry and cry so much the more, become desperate about it?' The Lord waits to see that. We have known so many cases, when sinners have been seeking the Lord, and we would have thought that immediately they began to seek the Lord they would find Him—and yet very often the Christian worker has been greatly perplexed and distressed. Days and nights pass in agony. There seems to be no coming of the Lord to save. What is the Lord doing? He is just bringing out that desperation that represents a heart conviction that, unless the Lord does this thing, there is nothing else to live for. It is a matter of life and death; and it is not cheaply and easily got.

And what is true at the beginning is true all the way along. There is no end to Divine revelation; there is no end to our seeing. Oh, how little we have seen, how little we know, of the vast stores of Divine intention and thought and purpose and meaning. We stand and paddle on the shores of this vast ocean of God and of His purposes and meanings in our creation. How little we know about it!—and we are not going to know until we have deep heart exercise. But it is there, and it is there for us, and oh, we have got to come in this way—'so much the more'. Are you like that after a conference, or after any meeting in which there has been a ministry of God's Word? Are you sure you have seen all that God meant you to see? Are you just hearing what is said? You agree—but what is the effect? The real effect waits upon this heart exercise, this crying out—and a crying out 'so much the more'. The Lord is not close and mean, holding it from you, but He is wanting to know that this is of greater price to you than all else; if needs be, of greater price than your sleep, your rest: you are going to give Him no rest until He opens your eyes.

That is very simple, but it is very important.

#### THE ENEMY'S ATTEMPTS TO SILENCE US

The other thing in this connection is that there will always be plenty of things to try to silence you, to make you be quiet, to 'shut you up'. There were those who commanded this blind man to

hold his peace. There is always much to command you to hold your peace. But much may depend upon our *not* holding our peace. That applies in much larger realms than just this one of receiving Divine eye-opening.

Very often we never enter into the real value of a thing until we make a declaration of our attitude toward it. Very often we do not enter into the real value of our Christian life until we begin to proclaim something about it. I expect some of you know that. I was a Christian for some years; I had given my heart to the Lord. I believed that I was saved, and I am sure I was, but I was not enjoying it: I was not a free man, loosed inside, in the real joy of the Christian life, until one night I stepped right into the centre of an open-air meeting and gave my testimony and began to talk from that testimony, and from that day to this I have been a free man in the enjoyment of salvation. At the time I wondered if it was only then that I was really converted—so real was the difference. That is very simple and elementary, but it applies all the way along. There are plenty of things that will keep us silent: shame, for instance—that will keep us silent. Fear will say, Be quiet; will keep us with our mouths shut. Despair is a terrible thing for quietening us, or preventing us from speaking. And oh, what a veto upon declaration is pride! Yes, there are many things that are saying, Hold your peace! This man stood up to them all, he resisted them all, and, although they said, 'Hold your peace, man, hold your peace!', he said, 'I am not going to hold my peace', and out it came—'so much the more'. It is an impressive picture. It is almost humorous if it were not so serious—a man absolutely refusing to be bottled up, so much did he feel the importance of the matter in hand.

It is just like that over everything that the Lord has for us. We are not to be silenced. We cry—and nothing happens. We cry to the Lord, and nothing happens. And then the enemy comes along and says, 'You may as well be quiet—He is not hearing you! Do you think He will have regard to you? He has got more important business than you! You must think yourself very important if you think He is going to turn aside from all His affairs to attend to you!' The enemy talks like that and tries, by making us feel our insignificance, to quieten us, to silence us. But you be in the company of blind Bartimaeus, and say, 'No, I am not going to be quiet! I believe that what I need lies in the power of that Man to give me, and I believe that, being Jesus of Nazareth, having come down to so low a level of association and fellowship. He

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will have respect unto my cry. I may be a nobody, but He will have respect to the cry of a nobody! This is the kind of spirit that will not be silenced.

Is it too simple? It is important! As we get further and further on, there is so much more for the Lord to reveal to us of His fulness. It will always be the same—plenty of things to silence, to put to quietness, to tell us to hold our peace. You remember the Lord's parable of the importunate widow and the unjust judge. He hung the whole of that parable on this: that the man would not have regard to her for any other reason than that she worried the life out of him; and the Lord turns and says, 'If an unjust man will yield to importunity, how much more the Just Man—how much more One who is not like that!' (Luke xviii. 1-8). And yet His Church must cry unto Him day and night, not because He is unjust and unwilling and unmoved, but because He must have in those who are in need a deep enough sense of the importance of these things. You say, 'Why speak like that? Don't we all feel that?' Dear friends, while one is more and more hesitant to say anything to criticize Christians or the Church, surely it is true that there is not sufficient of this downright earnestness to know all that God wants us to know. We are too contented, too complaisant, too satisfied with a little: we are not on full stretch for all that God means, and He is not going to give it until we cry—and cry 'so much the more'.

"Jesus of Nazareth passeth by." With Him is all the power to give everything necessary to bring into all that God intended—and He may pass by. He might have just left Jericho and gone away. They were going out of Jericho; He might just have gone out of Jericho and gone on His way. But knowing, being informed—that was enough for Bartimaeus. Being informed that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by precipitated the whole matter. Oh, that we all were sufficiently aware of

how needy we are of having our eyes opened to all God's meaning for us! Oh, that our hearts were sufficiently concerned to enter into everything God purposes for us! Oh, that we felt something more of the strong meaning of—"Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him" (1 Cor. ii. 9). It never will enter into our hearts, it never will be seen by our eyes or heard by our ears, until we realise, and lay to heart, how important it is and how valuable, and we begin to cry out, 'Have mercy upon me!' It is not only the cry of a sinner, but the cry of a mature saint. 'Have mercy still upon my lack of capacity, my limitation in apprehension, my smallness of sight! Have mercy upon me!'

Paul's prayer to God was "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; having the eyes of your heart enlightened" (Eph. i. 17-18). That was his prayer. It was not going to happen unless someone stood in between the need and the supply and mediated by prayer. It is a big matter. The Lord put that spirit into our hearts. Do realise that a great deal does hang upon this importunity, this seriousness, this laying hold, and not just coming and going to meetings and then wondering why we are so retarded in our spiritual growth, so easily a prey to the forces around us in this world. Perhaps it is because we have not yet expressed an adequate appreciation of Divine things by laying this matter to heart and constantly being before the Lord that we may receive our sight. If at this moment you are recognising that "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by", you have only to cry from your heart—He has what you need. The Lord put the cry in our hearts.

T. A-S.

## FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

## STAMP COLLECTING

ONE of the most popular hobbies amongst both boys and girls is that of collecting stamps. It is very good fun sorting out the stamps of different countries, checking their values and colours, swapping the stamps which you don't want in order to get those which you do, and then sticking them on their mounts, so that they can be fixed in their proper places in a Stamp Album. You even learn Geography without meaning to, as you turn over

page after page in your album, getting to know the many countries of the world, each with its own special stamps.

When you come to the pages which are set aside for Great Britain, I wish that you would take a good look at those familiar stamps of ours. Some have Queen Victoria's head on them, and others the heads of those kings who have succeeded her, Edward VII, George V, then Edward again

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(though he was never crowned), then George VI, and now our own new queen, Elizabeth II. Look carefully, and you may find that there is something about our stamps which makes them different from all the others, even from those of the Commonwealth and Colonies. I wonder if you can discover what it is. It is not what is on them, but what is not there. Something is missing.

Look at the other countries. Every land has its name printed on its stamps. Sometimes the word is printed in letters which we can understand, even though the name is not always the one we use. In other cases, however, the particular script of the country is quite unlike ours, and we may have to guess what the letters are which make up the country's name. We cannot read Chinese, or Turkish, or Russian. Still, the name is there, and folk who know the language and understand the lettering, which is so strange to us, are well able to read it.

But there is one exception to all the rest of the lands of the world. There is one country which does not need to have its name on its postage stamps, and indeed makes a special point of not printing it. Have you found which one it is yet? The country is our own—Great Britain—and we are justly proud of this distinction from all other nations.

It is really due to the fact that postage stamps were first used in this land of ours, when nobody else had them, though then they were only used for letters within the country, for there was no foreign service. No title was needed, for letters were not sent beyond our shores. The only words on the stamps are *Postage Revenue*, which show what the money is used for, and distinguish them from other kinds of stamps. These words are still on our stamps, but nothing more. When other countries started up a postal service, and our stamps were used for sending letters abroad, we still felt that there was no need to tell the world the name of our country. They could all see it for themselves.

You may ask, how can they see it? How can folks know that the stamps come from Britain? How can stamp collectors throughout the world be sure which page our stamps belong to? The answer is really very simple. They know by the king's or the queen's likeness which is always the main feature of the stamp.

Perhaps you have sometimes thought that our stamps are rather dull, and wished that they might have pretty scenes, or interesting industries, or

great men on them, as other countries do. As a matter of fact, there *is* rather a sameness about them, but at least none can deny that they are unmistakable. Everybody knows our stamps, even if they cannot speak our language, for the ruler's head speaks for itself. Many peoples, even though they are foreigners to us, have great respect for our royal family. George VI was a man whom the whole world thought highly of. In most cases people were glad to see the likeness of the king, for they honoured him. But even in the case of those who did not like him, it was still true that they could not fail to recognise the stamp. They might have hated him, but at least they could not deny that his likeness was a guarantee of the land from which the stamp came.

There is a sense in which we should be like our stamps. We should always carry the likeness of King Jesus wherever we go. Some may be glad to recognise it, for they respect and honour our Lord. Others may not like it, they may even show hatred to us, but at least they should know without any question or doubt that we belong to the Lord and serve Him. This needs more than just a name or title. The true Christian doesn't need a special label, he doesn't have to wear special clothes or use strange and unusual speech. He must be known to all by his likeness to the Lord Jesus, by the fact that in every place where he is found he brings the Lord into view.

We all have what we call 'Christian' names, but they do not make us Christians. Many people belong to Christian churches, or say their prayers in the name of Christ, but neither does this make them Christians. The true Christians are those who bear the likeness of the King, those who have trusted Him as Saviour and received His eternal life into their hearts. They may be of different colours and of different values, like the stamps, but they make it clear to the whole world that Jesus is their King.

People can argue about words and names, and about the different churches. We may find it difficult to prove to them that what the Bible says is true. But there is a proof that silences all arguments, and that is a Christ-like life. Perhaps it was this which Paul meant when he said, "From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear branded on my body the marks of Jesus" (Galatians 6. 17). and it is this which we mean when we sing.

"Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me".

How important it is that, like the British stamps, we carry our King's likeness wherever we go!

H. F.



## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

## WE BEHELD HIS GLORY

## (CHAPTER I OF VOL. II)

Reading: John x.

FROM THE INDIVIDUAL TO  
THE CORPORATE

AT this point in the Gospel of John we find ourselves in the presence of a distinct transition. Up to this point, everything has been *individual*; a long series of individuals or individual cases have been in view. At this point a change takes place: we pass from what is individual to what is *collective* and *corporate*. Henceforth what will be in view will be a company. It will be *collective*, in the sense that all the parts represented in the first half of the Gospel will be brought together and found gathered into this company. It will be *corporate*, because a common life is the basis of everything.

We make a distinction between what is collective and what is corporate. Note this distinction. A congregation is not necessarily a body. It is collective, because a lot of units are brought together into one place; but a body presupposes an organic oneness, on the basis of life. Life is here clearly seen to be the basis of what is corporate: as in the case of the flock, where the members share a common life; or as in the case of the vine, which is an organism where all the many parts are made a unity by the one life. And so we find that, from this point onward, all that has hitherto been said about life as related to individuals, is now reproduced in principle in a corporate company, a corporate body, in the sense of many being one because of one life.

Chapter x introduces the characteristics of what is corporate, and specifically the characteristics of this corporate body or company which is in view.

Let us underline the fact of the transition. If the Holy Spirit is to be true to the Divine mind, there is bound to come a point in the history of any local company when—if He is allowed to have a free way—quite spontaneously things pass from what is just individual to what is corporate. It is a spontaneous and inevitable movement, because it is perfectly clear from all the Scriptures that God has purposed to realise His full design, not in separate, unrelated parts, but in a corporate whole, on the basis of life. So I repeat, if the Spirit of God is in charge, He will be consistent with the Divine

mind, and, sooner or later, where He is really in charge of a company, things must inevitably pass from mere individualism to the corporate. It is not announced at this point in the Gospel that that is the nature of the change, but it is perfectly clear, and it is something that we should take account of for ourselves.

We are very fond of this chapter; we should be very sorry to lose John x. We should also be very sorry to lose John xv. These chapters on the sheep and the vine are very precious portions of God's Word. But let us take note that the values contained in these chapters are corporate values, and can only be enjoyed by the individual in a corporate relationship. That will be borne out as we go on.

What I am trying to emphasize and make clear at this point is that this matter is in the hands of the Holy Spirit, who is so consistent with the thought of God as to bring about quite naturally a spontaneous transition from the individual to the corporate at some point in our spiritual course. To fail to recognise that, and to fail to be in that movement of the Spirit, means to be left with just the spiritual measure that an individual can have, which is far short of what the Body can have; and I think this explains a very great deal of the limitation in literally multitudes of very devoted and earnest Christians, who are just individual Christians, living individual lives, trying to be individuals devoted to the Lord. There is limitation in that, and so, noting the movement of the Spirit of God in this matter, we should be intent upon knowing what the characteristics of that corporate life and Body are.

Another thing about the matter presented in chapter x is that, in common with all new beginnings of God, it contains the germs of all future development. I think you are aware of the principle that, when God takes a fresh step, in that fresh step there is inherent, in principle and in germ form, all that will eventually develop. We will not stay to illustrate this from other passages, but it can be seen here, and you will be able to follow it as we go on. Suffice it to say that all that is going to come out later on, not only in John's Gospel but in the whole revelation of the New Testament, will be found in a few basic principles in this very chapter.

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### THE RIGHTFUL SHEPHERD

The first characteristic, then, of this corporate company, now introduced, is Christ, the authoritative Shepherd. It is a question of who is the rightful shepherd, who has the right to be the shepherd, who stands in that position and relationship by God's own appointment, approval and seal. Whom has the Father sealed? You notice that word. "Him the Father, even God, hath sealed" (John vi, 27). "Sanctified" (John x, 36) and "sealed". It is the question of the authority and right to be the shepherd. His own words about Himself are not just that He is good, in the sense of moral goodness. They go further than that. They declare that, on the basis of that goodness of character, He is the true Shepherd.

We could very much enlarge upon Christ's right on the basis of His character, His nature, to be the shepherd. For the present we must note that, before there can be a real spiritual company, in the good of God's blessing in fulness, Christ must be in His place as rightful Shepherd, rightful Lord, the One in whom there must be reposed absolute confidence, about whose position there must be no question.

### ANTAGONISM TO THE SHEPHERD AND HIS FLOCK

That stands so strikingly in contrast to the atmosphere surrounding Him in the chapter which we have read. We note the steadily intensifying atmosphere of question as to His right, antagonism to His claims, refusal to acknowledge Him. In the end of the chapter is a company who "believed on Him there", who repudiated the repudiators, who stood against the whole atmosphere charged with questions about Him. You see, this antagonism is a very strong thing. It is something malicious, malignant, very strongly evil, as to the place of the Lord Jesus. His title, His rights; and it is over against this that such a company will have to stand. If you and I are to be found in all that it means to be really members of that elect Body, we are going to be in a relatedness which has the whole malignant force of hell set against it, because it is standing for the rights of the Lord Jesus.

From the beginning, Satan and his whole company have been set against the rights of the Lord Jesus. Satan is not against us as Christians, he is not against us in ourselves. We do not meet this antagonism simply because we have become members of the Christian fold. You can be that—you can be Christians in name, in title, in profes-

sion, and never meet the fury of hell; but stand in this relatedness of one life on the ground of the absolute sovereign Lordship, authority and right of Jesus Christ, and you are involved in that in which He found Himself. There will be plenty of stones taken up; there will be plenty done to bring an end to that testimony. This corporate company will meet much more even than the individuals as such. The individuals will find that they have to encounter very much more when they stand on the ground of the oneness of the Body of Christ than they would if they stood on an independent, individualistic ground. So that the very first characteristic of this corporate expression of Christ and His life is the testimony that the rights are all His, that He alone occupies this place of Shepherd.

### AN ELECT COMPANY

The next thing which becomes so clear in this chapter, which I hinted at just now, is that this is an elect company. We are now, of course, able to read this chapter in the light of the fullest revelation of the truth, brought us later in the New Testament particularly through Paul, although not through him alone, that the Church is an elect Body. While the Lord Jesus speaks of Himself as having been sanctified and sealed by the Father, He speaks in similar language of the sheep. How often it is from this point onward that the Lord Jesus is found to be speaking of "those whom the Father hath given me", "those whom thou gavest me"; and here in this chapter we read: "I know mine own". "I know them", "mine own know me". There is something about them that marks them off as known of God, foreknown of God, and He distinctly says to these other people that the reason they do not believe, they do not hear and they do not know His voice, is because they are not of His sheep. If they were His sheep, they would know His voice, but they are not, and that by their own exercise of will. "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life".

### TWO FOLDS

The next thing here is the division which immediately appears and broadens when He is in His place, and when He is securing that elect company. There are here in this chapter, mentioned or implied, two folds, and He says quite clearly that He came to lead His flock out of one fold and that He is making another fold. It does not

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require a great deal of insight to recognise what the two folds are. There is a little fragment which is the key to it. " *God sent forth his Son, . . . born under the law, that he might redeem them which were under the law* " (Gal. iv. 4 - 5). That is only saying, in other words, ' that He might get them out of that fold, that legalistic fold '. The whole atmosphere of this chapter speaks of the legalistic fold—the fold of Judaism, where it is law. This is in keeping with the introduction to this Gospel: " *The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ* " (John i. 17). The Lord saw a fold—and what a fold it was, and what shepherds they were! Firstly, they had made the sheep that were really His their own. They therefore regarded Him as a ' sheep-stealer '. Then the effect of their relationship to the sheep was to bring them into spiritual bondage, to limit their spiritual growth, and to make them servants of a tradition, an earthly and man-controlled system, rather than the Lord's free people. It would not be a bit helpful to pursue that thought, but it is very like organized Christianity as we know it. That is the kind of fold—hard, legalistic, selfish. Christ came to lead His sheep out from that fold, and to bring them into another—the fold of grace, liberty, life, life more abundant, and all the full heavenly purpose for the Church.

So the two folds are, clearly, the fold of merely traditional religion, and the fold of spiritual truth, reality and life in Christ.

THE WAY FROM THE FOLD OF LAW  
TO THE FOLD OF GRACE

What is the way out and the way in? The way out and the way in is Christ's death. " I lay down my life for the sheep ". Here it is not so much the sin question that is to the fore, although that lies, of course, at the root of everything. He was " born under the law, that he might redeem them which were under the law. " His death was to extricate from that fold, that system, that deadly thing that was against them—" the bond written in ordinances that was against us " (Col. ii. 14). He laid down His life for the sheep. His death was the way out. The whole of the New Testament afterward bears down upon this, that it is by the death of the Lord Jesus that we are delivered from the bondage of the law—that law which is constantly and eternally battering us with our own sin, breaking and shattering us with our own state. His death is the way out; His resurrection is the way in. " Who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus

Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible " (I Pet. i. 3 - 4). So deliverance by the death of Christ is one of the characteristics of the company. They have come into the good and value of the delivering death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, with all its blessing and enlargement. They stand on that ground.

Let me return to something I said a little earlier, that while individuals, of course, come that way—and they must so come—we must recognise that death with the Lord Jesus, and resurrection in union with Him, sees the end of all individualism. God's intention is to bring to an end what is merely individual. There must be an individual entering in, but for it to remain an individual thing is contrary to the meaning of the death of Christ. Right from this time onward, it is seen in this Gospel that the full blessing lies on the far side of Jordan. In the Old Testament, the Israelites were a people, one people, on the other side of Jordan; and when you get on the far side of the Jordan, you are immediately found as a part of a people, and not just as individuals.

So it is in the New Testament. You come to Colossians and Ephesians, or to what is represented by those letters. You find immediately that you are " raised together with Him ". It is the Church that is in view; you have left merely individual ground, you are now on corporate ground. Christ's death is intended to bring that about. If we have not apprehended that, we are still in the limitation which a merely individual life must know. It is very important for us to recognise that.

It is all a matter of God's purpose. What is God's purpose? What is revealed to be " the eternal purpose . . . purposed in Christ Jesus "? You will find always that the Scriptures demand the Church for the eternal purpose; the whole Body which gives Christ the vessel for His collective and corporate expression. That is the way of the eternal purpose, and it is on resurrection ground that we come into it. Therefore that which is only individualistic goes out with the death of Christ, and in the resurrection of Christ it is found no more in the thought of God. Christ's death is the way out; Christ's resurrection is the way in. That is the principle here enunciated.

## " THEY KNOW MY VOICE "

The next thing is that, because of the relationship which we have set forth—Christ in unquestioned and undisputed authority; because they have been brought out through His death and resurrection from the realm of law to the realm of



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grace, that is from mere profession to the realm of life ("I give unto them eternal life"; "I came that they may have life and may have it abundantly"); because of their life-relationship with Him, through His death and resurrection, there is an inward 'something' about this company, an inward correspondence with Him. "My sheep hear my voice"; "they know my voice". You cannot explain that in language. It is something that goes beyond language, it is something that can only be known in fact. It is one of those mysteries of John. ("How can a man be born when he is old?"—iii. 4. "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"—vi. 52.) But it is fact.

I have often recounted an experience I had once at a place in the Near East, where, from various directions, shepherds were coming to a well with their mixture of sheep and goats following them. As they came to the well, all the sheep and goats got mixed up. I stood a little way off, watching this. I saw them all merge, and saw the shepherds get together and have a talk. I thought, 'This is a glorious mix-up! What is going to happen? how will they be able to get their flocks sorted out?' So I waited until the shepherds had finished their talk and had decided it was time to move off. One shepherd simply walked right away. He got right away up on the hill and turned round and started calling a strange note—I could not reproduce the sound. And those sheep began to open up, and his own flock just went up there to him, and all the rest were left. Each shepherd had his own note and call. The sheep knew the voice of their shepherd. I thought it was marvellous how those sheep should know. Well, they had learned to know. "The sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name . . . and the sheep follow him: for

they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow". If I had tried to imitate that shepherd, I should have got no response at all; but they knew him.

There is something of an inward correspondence which we know by the Spirit. We know when the Holy Spirit speaks to us, and we usually know when the stranger speaks. We detect something strange, something foreign, about it; it does not answer, does not correspond to the Lord in us; we are not happy about it. It is a mystical something, but it is very real. But that is the basis of spiritual intelligence, and that is the point I am stressing. Those who are of this company, of this corporate Body, have an inward correspondence with the Lord, a basic spiritual intelligence whereby they know Him. They do not always have to be told by others, 'This is what the Lord wants', or 'That is not what the Lord wants'. They may be helped by counsel; but there is a place, a position, of walking with the Lord where we do not always have to be told, where we know, even if it is by making mistakes—we know by the reaction of the Spirit of the Lord in us. The point is that there is a spiritual intelligence which is essential to the purpose of God in the company He is securing in relation to His Son.

These are principles: they are not expounded, but they are there in this tenth chapter of John's Gospel. It is a wonderful chapter, and what we have said is only a very small part of its content. But let us seek to grasp these tremendous basic laws of God's eternal purpose into which we are called in Christ, and to lay them to heart and ask the Lord to work them into us, so that they are not merely things in the Scripture or in an address: they are realities in our spiritual life.

T. A-S.

## TIME AS GOD'S INSTRUMENT

*"Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found favour in thy sight, show me now thy ways, that I may know thee, to the end that I may find favour in thy sight" (Ex. xxxiii. 13).*

*"He made known his ways unto Moses, his doings unto the children of Israel" (Psa. ciii. 7).*

### GOD'S END

IT is our very great privilege, as the people of God, that we should have revealed to us the ultimate goal and purpose of the Lord. Until there is some measure of revelation of that eternal purpose, we are very largely, even though children

of God, found drifting on the ocean of love and grace without appreciating where the harbour is, and without in any way co-operating in the reaching of that harbour. We know that God's eternal purpose is to sum up all things in Christ; that is, that the ultimate destiny of this universe is to be filled with Christ, everything speaking glory, revealing Christ. We know that it is the great privilege of the redeemed of the Lord, who are born again of His Spirit—that company variously termed in the Word—the Church of God, the bride, the wife, the city, the heavenly city—to be *the* means by which the very fulness of the character and being of the Lord Jesus shall be revealed.

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

That is all, as I say, a great privilege, that we should know what God is after.

### GOD'S WAY TO HIS END

But a very important, indeed an equally important, thing, is for us to know God's way to His end. All the way down the history of men with God, we find this breaking out, in Holy Writ particularly. We find there a deep heart concern and a seeking to know the way. "Show me . . . thy ways". Yes, it is most important to know how God intends to get there. It is the weakness of children, when they see something that attracts them, to rush headlong to get it. It is the privilege of parents, oftentimes, to restrain, in order that there should be a fuller appreciation of the desired thing in the end.

### THE FACTOR OF TIME

I think one of the greatest factors, if not the greatest factor, in God's ways is the matter of time. Time is a thing so contrary to what God is Himself—the great timeless Being, the eternal God; and yet He has ordained time for us and for His whole creation. It was by the word of the Lord that the day and the night were brought in, and the months and the years that followed. Time is of the greatest consequence in the pursuit of the realisation of the purpose of God. It is quite remarkable, if you look down the course of the years, how long the Lord takes. We have to have it impressed upon us continually that God is not in a hurry.

Abraham is given a vision and a promise. But within three generations we see the passing of the vessel through which the promise is to be fulfilled into the darkness of four hundred years' bondage in Egypt; passing, as it were, right out of sight. At the close of the four hundred years, something comes to light: an individual vessel is prepared for the emancipation of the corporate vessel. But once again there are forty years in the backside of the desert for this vessel—forty years! Yet a further move is made—and followed by forty years in the wilderness. Yes, and it is just on five hundred years more before the goal is reached of a king on the throne, a king after the heart and mind of God. Well might the Apostle say, and that to all the scoffers and the impatient of this age: "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (II Pet. iii. 8).

## THE TEST OF TIME

It was, I think, knowing that time was the great searcher and prover, that made the Lord Jesus utter that statement that mystified and perplexed His disciples: "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt. xxiv. 13). How time does prove the quality of a thing! How all that has had the appearance of being real just fades out in time. All the emotions, all the thrills, all the soulful features round about our salvation—all go in time. How often have we known young believers coming back after a period of time and saying they do not feel what they felt when they were saved. They are questioning their salvation. The Lord is testing, and it is only the real thing that will endure to the end.

How our motives in service are proved, tested, by time! We aspire to great thoughts in our love and devotion to the Lord; the romance of service grips us. Time alone will deal with it; no advice, no counsel, no question; only time. Time finds us out. The Lord intended that it should.

## THE HEALING OF TIME

Time is a great healer, and what a mercy that is. The griefs and sorrows of the years, the disappointments, the disillusionments, all lose their sting and bitterness in the passing of time, and, with the time passing, all their values are added in and our lives are mellowed instead of being embittered.

How wise the Lord is in His ways—strange, of course, to us, and so incomprehensible oftentimes, because of the impatience that is ours. We see the thing and, knowing it to be the thought of God, we reach out and strive for it—and the Lord does not help us; we cry to the Lord concerning the hindrances, the things that seem to chequer our spiritual life and experience, holding us up and diverting—and the Lord does not seem to answer prayer. The Lord in His grace is answering prayer, but He is using the instrument of time; and how often it is that as time passes it is not the problem that changes, but our attitude to it. The thing that was impossible for us to endure, we have to go on enduring; the Lord does not take it away. Time passes, and we find that we are able, by His help, to endure, and if the Lord had taken that thing out of our lives, what a lack of development there would have been. The Lord is allowing time to do its work.

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## THE EXHAUSTION OF TIME

Closely allied to this matter of time is the great matter of exhaustion. The Lord uses this means with us, of course, as His children, as those with whom He is particularly concerned. But He uses it also in His dealings with the nations and the peoples, and with the enemy; for it has always been His way with the great adversary to exhaust him. You recollect what happened in God's dealings with Pharaoh. God, with a word, could have utterly destroyed the whole land of Egypt; but He did nothing of the sort. God proceeded to exhaust Pharaoh, dealing with all the gods of Egypt one by one, in the plagues, and in the final stripping of the adversary in the slaying of the sons.

What God did in the beginning in the emancipation of the children of Israel from Egypt, He will do in the end. For our redemption is a wonderful thing, the greatest of mysteries. You recall that wonderful picture in the fifth chapter of the book of the Revelation. John is in heaven, and there, with all the array of the heavenly ones, he sees the title deeds of the inheritance of God—His people—in the form of a roll fast sealed with seven seals. The symbol is taken right out of the life and the legal order of the people of Israel. You go back to the book of Ruth. There the same issue is raised as to the redemption of the inheritance, and there is this sealed document that the 'goel', the kinsman-redeemer, alone can open, but any who think to have claims are allowed to bring them forward, so that it may be seen whether they have the right. That symbolism is taken hold of here in the Revelation, and there is no doubt but that all the way down the years the Lord has been allowing all who imagine that they have the key, the right, the ability, to open the roll, to put their claims forward to be tested—tested in time. The raising of the empires of Egypt, Babylon, Greece and Rome was all with this intent, that that key shall be found that shall unlock the door through which mankind shall be brought into the fulness of the purpose of the creation, into the fulness of the glory associated with creation.

In this picture in the Revelation, John, because he knows the state of man's heart, the state of need, the suffering and anguish that there is in the earth, sees, so to speak, one thing after another attempt to face the challenge of the seven seals of the book, and fail; and he "wept much". It was not mere sentiment with John. His weeping was for sheer desperation as to what was going to be the answer. But then he hears the words: "Weep not; . . . the Lion . . . of the tribe of Judah, . . . hath overcome.

to open the book". 'The Lamb, He has the answer; the Lamb has the power; redemption of the whole creation is with the Lamb'. When everything else has exhausted itself, the claims of God's Son will be brought home.

But so the Lord uses this great weapon of exhaustion, and that is what He is using with you and me. Oh, the heats, the fires, the passions, that have got to be exhausted in us! Oh, this nature of ours that has to be just spun right out! The Lord does not sovereignly intervene to cut it short in its ways. He has shown us what He is after—conformity to His Son. He is working to that. Yes, by the Cross, we say in general terms, by the application of the Cross day by day, the steady, progressive, but sure release of us from all this that is *us*. The ultimate has got to be 'all things summed up in Christ', everything of Christ. That means that what is not Christ in you and in me has somehow got to go. It is agony. God is exhausting us. He is dealing with those features that are so inimical to His Spirit. They have got to be emptied, poured right out, lost as waters in the sand. God is being patient with us. He is allowing us, even in the zeal that we put forth in His service, so to speak to have our fling, but the end of it will be to bring in the other great factor in God's ways—the greatest of them all—the factor of grace.

## THE WONDER OF GRACE

We cannot know the real meaning of the grace of God whilst we have strength and energy left to pursue our own course. Oh, the wonder of grace, the glory of it! To be found in helplessness, without any ability left to do anything of ourselves to fulfil what we believe to be God's desire, and then to be carried on the ocean of the grace of God. Is not that something of the meaning of that wonderful conception of the temple in Zerubbabel's day—the topstone added, the completion brought about, and the "shoutings of Grace, grace, unto it" (Zech. iv. 7)? It is the grace of God that has done it all, that has brought in all this wonderful wealth of redemption, the fulness of the glory of the purpose of God. Grace overflowed the banks, surmounted all the barriers and hedges that we put up. They have gone down in the course of time, in the process of our being exhausted, and now there is room for the grace of God. You remember that little word in Isaiah: "Therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you" (Is. xxx. 18). He will allow time and the power of exhaustion to go on in order to be gracious, that we should know the blessedness and come into the fulness of the benefits of His grace.



A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

Wherever we are in the process of His dealings, we shall need to know, if we are going to cooperate with Him, if we are going to be intelligent ones in His workings, that God is using time to counter all our impatience, God is exhausting us, and it is all unto the manifesting of the ways of His grace. Are you the more ready to abide under His hand, to 'wait for Him that worketh for you' (1s. lxiv. 4)? Are you the more ready to let go the

strength, the tenacity, the strong mind, that is yours—to let go, yield it up, to be emptied of all the strengths of the flesh, the heat of nature, in order that you should know the abundance of grace? "They that receive the abundance of grace . . . reign in life" (Rom. v. 17); that stands for time and eternity. "They that receive abundance of grace *reign*". The Lord give us to respond to His ways and to receive the abundance.

A. G. T.

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