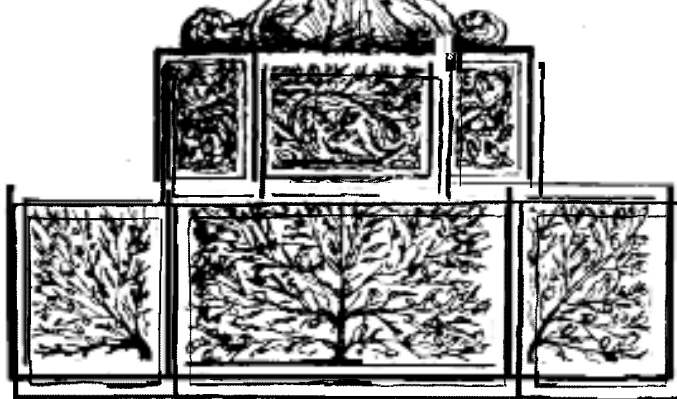


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**A WITNESS
AND
A TESTIMONY**

"The Testimony of Jesus" Rev. 1. 9.



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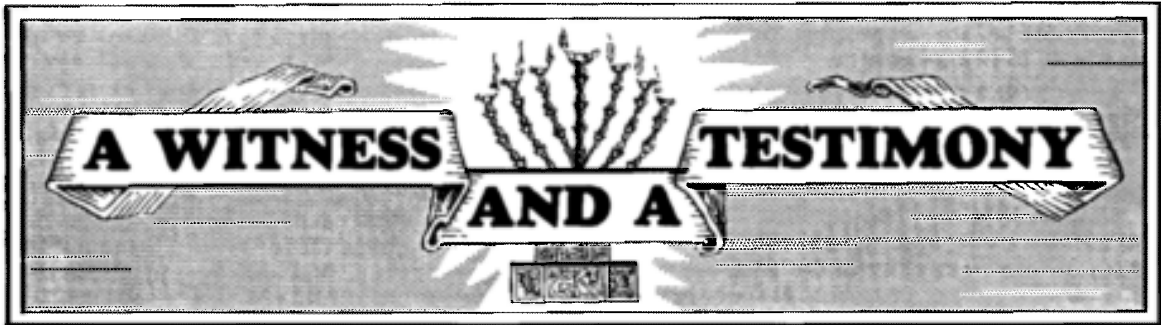
THIS MINISTRY

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 (literally—*full knowledge*) of the Son of God, unto a full-grown 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

" ACCORDING TO CHRIST "

(continued)

THE first part of this consideration has been a general survey and statement as to the nature and purpose of the Church (universal) and the churches (local). We proceed now to look at foundations, but some things already said need elucidating and enlarging, and the matter now to be considered will serve this purpose, and touch vitally the beginnings of the Church in both its aspects, the universal and the local. At a point we made a statement which, if not rightly understood, could lead to a false position and to unfortunate results. It was this: ' The recognition of the Church is an event which is of such a revolutionary character as to emancipate from all merely traditional, historical, and earthly systems: as see the Apostles, and especially Paul.'

How important it is that that should be kept in the context. In other words, how necessary it is that the ' recognition ' should really be an *event*. There are many who ' break away ', and become ' free-lance ' people or movements, on any other ground or occasion than a spiritual crisis of seeing the *positive* way of the Lord. This often leads to more limitation and negation than was found in

the position which they have left. It is true that Paul, at one point, came to a definite crisis over Judaism, and as from that day said: " Lo, we turn to the Gentiles " (Acts xiii. 46b). But that is not how he, or the other Apostles, came into the Church. Something happened inside before it happened outside. Their spirits went ahead of their bodies or reason. They inwardly migrated; the Holy Spirit took them even where they had not contemplated—or perhaps intended—going. It was all a spiritual movement, not something of men. It was the Holy Spirit inculcating the significance of Christ.

We are now brought to those more positive features and principles of a Divine movement. The first of these is far from easy to state without the risk of misapprehension. Even the very words used are open to a false interpretation. This is because we are in the presence of one of the many paradoxes with which the Bible abounds. The paradox here is that of Christ satisfying the heart, and yet the Spirit reaching on and ever on. Nevertheless, when rightly understood, this first feature is perfectly clear throughout the Bible, and clearly seen

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in all God's movements. Since the very constitution of man, from his first digression, is always to digress—and history is one long story of human digression from God's way—all God's return movements have been the result of another element powerfully at work. This element is what we may call—

The Divine Discontent.

We must very heavily underscore the word DIVINE! While 'The word of the Lord' may have come to Patriarchs, Prophets, Judges, Apostles, resulting in a commission and a mandate, it is very easy to discern that, either before or by that word, there was found in them an unrest, a dissatisfaction, a sense that there was something more in the intention of God. Inwardly they were not settled and satisfied. Maybe they could not define or explain it. They did not know what they wanted. It was not just a discontented disposition or nature. It was not just criticism, or querulousness, or 'disgruntledness', a spirit of being 'agin the government', as of a malcontent. *God* was not satisfied, and He was on the move. These sensitive spirits, like Abraham, and Moses, and Samuel, and Daniel, and Nehemiah, and a host of others in every age—Old Testament, New Testament, and since—have been God's pioneers, because of an inward link with His Divine discontent.

Of course, this is one aspect of all spiritual progress, but it is very true of every new thing of God. We shall yet lay down the basis of the difference between natural and spiritual, human and Divine, discontent, but for the moment we are concerned with the fact and the principle. If this discontent is a truly Divine activity, it will not be a matter of mere human frustration. It will have nothing to do with natural ambition or aggressiveness. It will resolve into a sheer issue of spiritual life or death. It will become a soul-travail.

Personal and worldly interests will fail to govern. What is politic from the standpoint of advantages in this life will fail to dictate the course. There may be a Divine restraint as to time, but the inevitable ultimate issue is known deep down. A crisis is known to be imminent, and the issue is one of obedience to the way of the Spirit, or surrender to policy. If the spirit is pure, and the life in God selfless, there will be a growing sense of 'not belonging', of having already moved on, or being out with the Lord, and it is only a matter of being 'obedient to the heavenly vision'.

How often, when we have come into something new of the Lord, we have been able to say: 'This

is what I have been looking for and longing for. I did not know what it was, but this answers to a deep call in my heart which has kept me dissatisfied for years'. So, just as the confession or salvation of an individual is always with the sense of having come home, a local church should be to the company a coming home, the supply of a deep need, the answer to a deep longing; just 'my spiritual home'. The spirit has been on a spiritual journey and quest, and now it has found—or is beginning to find—the answer. This quest will never reach its end until we are all at Home at last; but *something* directly in line with the end, and of the very essence of the full, should be found in the local 'family' representation.

Have we made it clear? Do you see that 'churches' should not be just congregations, preaching places, or places for religious observances? They should be, in their inception, constitution, and continuation, the answer to God's dissatisfaction; that which provides Him with the answer to His age-long quest in the hearts of all concerned. If there is one thing that God has made abundantly clear, it is that He is committed to the fulness of His Son, Jesus Christ. That fulness is to find its first realisation in the Church, "which is the fulness of him". Therefore God will only commit Himself to that which is in line with that purpose. As we have said elsewhere, it can be taken as an axiom that, if we are to find God committing Himself, it is essential to be wholly in line with His object at any given time.

But God *must* have a clear and free way. The Church and the churches are not now the starting-point of God, although they should stand very near to it. Some serious work has to be done before there can be a true expression of the Church in any locality. So, a cursory glance through the Bible will make it clear that the very door to the House of God was the altar. It barred the way, and at the same time led the way, to the Sanctuary. In the New Testament, of course, it is Christ crucified in direct line with Pentecost, the Church, and the churches. The Cross bars the way and points the way.

But when the Church is reached (so to speak), that is not the end of the work of the Cross. When we have come in, the Cross still governs. Thus it comes about that, in the New Testament, we have a very great deal about the Cross *in* the Church and the churches. It is quite clear that, when spiritual progress toward the ultimate fulness of Christ was arrested or impeded, or when things became defiled or disordered, the Holy Spirit, through the Apostles' letters, or by a visit, brought in the Cross

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with fuller meaning or stronger emphasis. This can be seen immediately, when we read such letters as those to the "Romans", "Corinthians", "Galatians", "Ephesians", "Philippians", "Colossians", and "Hebrews", with the Cross as the key. It is back to Christ crucified that the Spirit invariably leads or calls, when purity, truth, life, power, and liberty are in question.

What, then, is the particular relationship of the Cross to the Church, and to the churches themselves?

Undoubtedly, the Cross says that in any true expression of Christ, individually and collectively (which is the sole object of their existence), there is no place for man by nature! Christ crucified goes beyond the door, which is atonement, justification, righteousness as acceptance through faith. Christ crucified is, in representation, the devastation of the whole race of the old creation, with its nature. The agonized cry of God-forsakenness, the accompanying signs in a darkened sun, earthquake and rending rocks, all comprised the mighty 'NO' of God and of Heaven to that creation. That was the all-inclusive climax of every pointer by death through the past ages.

The death of Christ was infinitely more than the martyrdom of Jesus. It was universal and eternal. In that all-comprehending veto was involved every realm affected and infected by Satan's corrupting influence and touch. To bring back into any sphere of God anything that lies under that ban is, on the one side, to deny and contradict the Cross; and, on the other hand, sooner or later to meet certain devastation. This was very early demonstrated, as a sign-instance, in the case of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts v), as well as by others in 'Acts' and at Corinth who intruded natural reasoning, passions, and behaviour into the realm of the Holy Spirit's jurisdiction. It is as though the Holy Spirit took hold of the Cross and smote them to death, or, in some cases, very near it.

There is very much tragic history contained in what we have here said; not least the weakness, reproach, confusion and ineffectiveness of the Church and the churches. The natural man serves himself of the Church. In it he displays his import-

ance, his lust for power, his craving for self-expression (very often in ministry itself), and many other aspects of his selfhood—that Satanic thing which was begotten in the race when the supreme 'I' gained man's will for an act of spiritual fornication; for that is what it proved to be.

In the churches, it is all too often—and too much—that we meet people themselves, and not supremely Christ. At the beginning, the essential thing, as we shall see more fully presently, was *spiritual* men, as standing over against the 'natural man'. As the Church universal rests solely upon the foundation of Christ crucified, buried, and raised, so the churches must take their character from the foundation. Every member must be a crucified man or woman. Every minister must be a crucified man, and *evidently* so. No man should preach on any other ground than that he is compelled by the Holy Spirit. He should have no *natural* liking for preaching. Preaching ambition should be crucified! We verily believe that before a true church-expression can emerge, the foundation of the Cross must be deeply and truly laid with devastating effect upon all 'flesh'.

But, if the Lord means to have such an expression, the applying of the Cross will explain the meaning. This will not, and, in the nature of things, cannot, be all done at once. The movement toward fulness is progressive. So, again and again, that movement is marked by the fuller adjustments, releases, cleansings, of new and deeper works of the Cross. For greater fulnesses of Christ, there must be deep despair of any virtue, ability, resource, other than Christ risen and present in the Holy Spirit. We cannot 'form' or 'found' churches like this, but the Lord can bring into being a nucleus of well-crucified leaders, building therewith and thereon. If we put together Matthew xvi. 18 and John xii. 24, we shall see that the first is a declaration of purpose and intention; the second is the way in which it would come about. That way is the organic way, *i.e.* through death and resurrection, in which every grain shares, and to which all the grains, severally and corporately, are a testimony.

EDITOR

(to be continued)

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

THE ARM OF THE LORD

VI. RESURRECTION

WHEN we come to chapter liv of the prophecies of Isaiah, we have what we may call a sample chapter of resurrection—a sample of the conditions which the Lord would have as characterizing His 'New Day'. We find in this chapter eight features, or characteristics, of the New Day; eight, as you know, being the number of resurrection. Let us cast our eye down the chapter, and note them briefly in order.

(1) In verse 1, we see the movement from barrenness to fruitfulness. "*Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord.*"

(2) Verses 2 and 3: from straitness to enlargement. "*Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations; spare not: lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes. For thou shalt spread abroad on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall possess the nations, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.*" How true that was of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus!

(3) Verses 4 and 5: from shame to honour. "*Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth...*" and so on.

(4) Verses 6 and 7: from forsakenness to fellowship. "*For the Lord hath called thee as a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, even a wife of youth, when she is cast off, saith thy God. For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee.*"

(5) Verses 8 to 10: from wrath to mercy. "*In overflowing wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy redeemer.*" You see the look back to the Cross, in which all those things were true; but now it is resurrection, and they have passed. It is a mighty and wonderful change.

(6) Verses 11 and 12: from affliction and desolation, to comfort and glory. "*O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will set thy stones in fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy*

pinnacles of rubies, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy border of pleasant stones."

(7) Verses 14 and 15: from oppression to security. "*In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression, for thou shalt not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come near thee. Behold, they may gather together, but not by me: whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall because of thee.*"

(8) Verses 16 and 17: from reproach to vindication. "*Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the fire of coals, and bringeth forth a weapon for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness which is of me, saith the Lord.*"

Is this not a wonderful sample of resurrection life, power and glory? As in other connections, so in this, we carry it all over from Old Testament history into New Testament, into this very dispensation in which we live—the Day of Resurrection. How true all this was—and is—of the Lord Jesus, in the first place. There had been the negative side—all the straitness of which He spoke: "How am I straitened till it be accomplished!" (Luke xii. 50); the stripping, the barrenness and desolation of the Cross; the shame and ignominy; the forsakenness, even of His own Father and God—the very wrath of God rested upon Him; He suffered affliction, oppression and reproach. All those things were true, as we saw in chapter liii. But now the whole scene has changed. What fruitfulness has taken the place of barrenness! Yes, the 'corn of wheat, falling into the ground and dying', has indeed borne very much fruit—fruit out of many nations. What a great joy it is to us to know, and in so many cases to know personally, something of the fruitfulness of His sufferings, in the 'seeing of His seed'. Out of barrenness into fruitfulness; out of His straitness, against which He groaned, into the great enlargement which has come to Him—and what enlargement!—out of shame into honour; multitudes and multitudes ever since, and multitudes to-day, all over the world, are just heaping honour upon Him. And so we could go on.

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But you can see also how true this became of that little band of disciples. You can say that, at the time of the Cross, these negative and dark things were in a certain sense true of them. Yes, everything was gone; the trees were stripped bare; it was barrenness indeed. In their hearts they were saying: 'What has it all been for? It has all gone; we have lost everything.' But see the change from the Day of Pentecost onwards. From barrenness to fruitfulness—again you go through this list of characteristics—from straitness, as a little band, a little handful of men, hedged up in a few miles of Jerusalem, of Judaea, of Palestine, a little country—unto what? "Their sound", said Paul, "went out into all the earth, . . . unto the ends of the world" (Rom. x. 18). What enlargement! it was the lengthening of cords, the strengthening of stakes in resurrection. Their aloneness—the terrible loneliness that had come over them when He, as they thought, was dead—has given place to a marvellous fellowship, that is being established in relationship with an ever-growing company of fellow-believers. All these things came about: this wonderful change-over was true for the disciples.

But does it stop there? No! The same thing became true in every new believer; and it has been true from then on until now. These are the things which are the characteristics of the true believer's life—a *believer's* life! If you are living on the other side of the Cross, or even if you are living in the day of His death, just living with Christ dead, these things are not true. But if we are living, as true believers should, on the ground of His resurrection, then all these things are true. It is a very blessed thing for us to be able to say, without any hesitation or reserve, that He has changed our life from barrenness to fruitfulness; from straitness to enlargement; from shame to honour; from forsakenness and aloneness to fellowship; and so on. This is the heritage of every true believer.

IMMEDIATE EFFECTS OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

In the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, there is struck and sounded forth this wonderful note—a new life, a new hope, a new assurance! We see it clearly in the New Testament. It is worth noting the marvellous effect that His appearances had upon the people concerned. As far as we can see, there were about ten appearances of the Lord after His resurrection. Five of them took place on one day, between sunrise and perhaps a little after sunset; the other five were scattered over a period,

in different places. But it is most impressive, most instructive, to see the tremendous change that came over the people, and over the whole situation, between the time before He appeared, and the time He disappeared. Let us run through some of those appearances.

The first, undoubtedly, was with Mary Magdalene, who came early to the tomb, with spices, to anoint His body (Mark xvi. 9; John xx. 1-18). What a poor, sad, desolate, empty sort of person she was that morning! What a plaintive note there is as she beholds Him without recognising Him, and takes Him for the gardener: 'Sir, if you have borne Him away, tell me where you have laid Him'. Jesus only speaks her name—"Mary"—and the whole situation is transformed, transfigured! She hurries from the tomb—hurries away to tell the disciples. It would seem, too, that there were other women near-by, and that, as they were going, she and they, to tell the disciples, Jesus met them on the way—another transforming scene and experience (Matt. xxviii. 8-10; Mark xvi. 10, 11).

And then, we are told, He appeared to Simon Peter (Luke xxiv. 34; I Cor. xv. 5). It does not need very much imagination to picture what kind of Simon he was when Jesus appeared to him. He was not a very happy sort of man! If ever there was a man who felt he was bereft—bereft of everything, stripped, stark, alone, forsaken, and in utter despair—it must have been Simon Peter. And then Jesus appeared to him—gave him a private interview! Ah! that changed the whole situation, completely transformed the whole outlook for Simon.

Then there were the two disciples on their way to Emmaus (Luke xxiv. 13-35; Mark xvi. 12, 13). What sad, doleful, desolate men they were! As they walked those three miles, it must have seemed the longest three miles that two men had ever walked! But then Jesus appeared . . . Their eyes were opened, they saw . . . He went . . . and those three miles back were the shortest three miles that ever men had run! I don't know what their time was for the course!—but I am quite sure they were not conscious of those three miles. Distance and time lost all their meaning as they raced back, fleet of foot, to Jerusalem, to tell the others. And as they came in, before they could get out anything of what had happened to them, they were met with this from the other disciples: "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon"! They were changed men, and it was a changed scene in Jerusalem into which they came.

And He appeared to the apostles themselves, and to James, and to "above five hundred brethren at once" (I Cor. xv. 6, 7). His appearance—

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that is, His coming in resurrection—brought about a marvellous change on every occasion, in every situation. It represented a very real fulfilment of Isaiah liv—Isaiah liv is resurrection!

CAN THIS BE A PRESENT-DAY EXPERIENCE?

Now, the big question that arises for us is: Have we any ground for believing that this can be our own up-to-date experience? And I want to say that the New Testament presents us with very solid ground for just that. We find very much, in the experiences of men and women after the Lord had gone to glory, that had this effect. I need only turn you to the book of the Acts, and remind you of that Ethiopian on his way home, disappointed and desolate, sorrowful and perplexed. Surely we may say that, through His servant Philip and through the word of Isaiah liii, the Risen Lord met that man. The whole scene was changed. The last thing we hear of him is: "he went on his way rejoicing" (Acts viii. 39). Here is a transfigured life, a transfigured situation, because one has come into touch with the Risen Lord. That incident is typical of the marvellous transformation that took place when the Spirit of the Lord touched people, came into their lives, came into their midst. They met sometimes in much perplexity and oppression, in much affliction and suffering with the threats of the rulers, and they went away changed people, full of joy, full of confidence.

Has the dispensation changed since the time of the Acts? That book has never had a conclusion; it is just broken off. The Holy Spirit never intended Luke to write the end of the story, because it had to go on and on and on to the end of the dispensation. What was true then is to be true in our experience now. Yes, we have plenty of ground and evidence for this. But then, you say, 'On what ground can this experience be mine?' If the Scripture gives that which justifies an expectation that it should be true in our case, if we really have it in the Word that it ought to be like that with us, then the question arises, 'How can this be true of me?' Let me therefore try to say, as concisely as possible, how it can be—how we really can know this.

THE NEED FOR (1) A POSITIVE STAND UPON THE GROUND OF THE CROSS

Firstly, we must take our stand most positively on that ground which God has provided for us

through the Cross of the Lord Jesus. That is, we must appropriate all the values of Isaiah liii, as being provided for *us*. Isaiah liii tells us all that has been done for us. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him". "He bare the sin of many". Our whole state and condition, under condemnation and judgment, was put on Him by God Himself. 'He, *He* made His soul an offering for sin.' That was on the Divine side. If you and I will still linger on the ground of question or doubt as to whether the Lord Jesus has done that, for us, as men and women, for our sins, past, present and future, there is no hope of this transforming experience of resurrection! If you are still nursing condemnation, still opening your heart or your mind to accusations, you are, in effect, denying the work of the Lord Jesus on the Cross, and God cannot show you His mighty arm.

"To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Never to the man or woman who brings in any question as to the work of the Lord Jesus in His Cross! Never! You must get right off that ground in every way. If you are so fond of doubting and questioning, if you will so tenaciously hold on to condemnation, can you not swing right over in the opposite direction, put all that capacity for doubting and unbelieving round the other way, and say about your condemnation: 'I don't believe it! Isaiah liii says that He took all that for me: then I definitely do not believe, I will not believe—the Cross of the Lord Jesus forbids me to believe—that there is condemnation.' Yes, put your strong and mighty capacity for unbelieving the other way round—let it be converted! Put it over against all the work of the accusing spirits, the accusing conscience and the accusing heart. Meet the whole thing in reverse!

No, we shall never know this mighty, many-sided transformation and transfiguration of life, until we quite positively take our stand upon the values which we see secured for us in Isaiah liii. We shall once again, and in the simplicity of a beginner, have to sit down with that chapter, and, as has been so often said, put our own name in there: 'He was wounded for *my* transgressions; He was bruised for *my* iniquities; the chastisement of *my* peace was upon Him; with His stripes I am healed.' We shall never experience resurrection glory until we have our feet firmly planted on that ground. You see, it is *we ourselves* who constitute the ground of death: it is in *us*—it is not in Christ; we must therefore repudiate our own ground. We must say, when the Accuser would

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bring all our sins to remembrance: 'Yes, I know them well, and thousands more; but . . . there is One who died in my place.' Faith must credit God and Christ with the full meaning of the Cross.

(2) A POSITIVE DRAWING UPON THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION

Next, we must take a positive attitude at all times to "the power of his resurrection" (Phil. iii. 10)—the attitude of faith in 'God who raises the dead' (II Cor. i. 9). We must really reckon upon that 'extra', and that 'other', which is represented by the power of His resurrection. It is all true—that this is this and that is that, and things are as they are; it is all true. We are not putting on blinkers, trying to make believe that we are not as bad as we are, or things are not as bad as they are: we know that they are just as bad as they can be, inside and out. *But . . .* there is something more than that—an altogether transcendent factor: and that is, the power of His resurrection. We must take a very positive attitude at all times toward that.

(a) FOR PERSONAL LIFE

This means, in practical terms, a definite drawing upon His risen life. But it does not mean that we are thereby entitled to break the laws of God. For instance, if you speak at three or four or five meetings a day, for something like eleven weeks, without one day's rest, you are breaking the laws of God, and God will not protect you. That is exactly what I have known to happen. How long it takes us to learn these lessons—sometimes a whole life-time! We get drawn out by need and appeal and so on. I believe the Lord is very sympathetic, but, nevertheless, He does not set aside His laws. So I have to say, that, while avoiding breaking Divine laws, the laws of nature, the laws of our bodies (and you can never speak of the laws of nature without meaning God, for the laws of nature are an expression of God, and God is Himself the supreme Law of Nature: that is not Pantheism, but it does mean that the laws of nature bring you right into touch with God)—I say, while not violating God in His laws, in the body and so on, we must deliberately at all times draw upon His resurrection life. We *must* do it; we must keep a tight hold, so to speak, on the risen life of the Lord, and draw upon it; make a very practical thing of it.

When I was a small boy, I remember my mother telling me something that has remained with me

to this day. She was describing to me the death of my grandfather, an old man of eighty-four. She was sitting by his bed, holding his hand, as he was slowly, very slowly passing away. He had been a very strong man, physically, and this is what she told me. 'He had hold of my hand', she said, 'in a tremendous grip: I was praying for him, but he was gradually sinking away: but I felt as though he was drawing the very life out of me; I felt my very vitality being sapped; he was pulling something out of me, to hold on to life: and at last I could stand it no longer—I just had to wrench my hand out of his; and when I did so, he went.'

Well, I do not know how much scientific truth there is in that; but to me it is an illustration. We have literally got to draw on the vitality of our Lord. It is an attitude, a grip of faith: we must 'lay hold on life', as Paul said to Timothy (I Tim. vi. 12). It must be something that we *do*.

I fear we are far too indefinite in this matter of our relationship to our Risen Lord. We believe in the resurrection; we believe in resurrection life; and we believe that it is for us: but we are not definite enough about it. We must first ask ourselves: 'Do I need resurrection life? Am I in need of the power of His resurrection?' Of course, if you have no sense of need, you will not be definite about it; but if, in any way, you really feel your need of the power of His resurrection, that the Arm of the Lord should be revealed to you in that way, then ask yourself the further question: 'Are there any Scriptures, any statements in the Word of God, which justify me in believing that that life is for me?' Then, if you believe the answer to that to be in the affirmative, say to yourself: 'Let me get to the Word, and find out what it says about this; let me gather up, search out, all that the Word of God says about this matter of resurrection life—for me!'

Do it as an exercise, not just picking out random texts; get a strong foundation of Scripture under your feet. "*If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you*" (Rom. viii. 11). That is in the Bible! "*Always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus . . . that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh*" (II Cor. iv. 10, 11). That is Scripture! Gather up in this way all that you can find; take it to the Lord, and say: 'Lord, your Word clearly says . . .' (and here you can quote Scripture to Him, if you like: it is a very healthy thing to remind the Lord of His Word). 'Now, Lord, you have said that the power of the

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resurrection is to be known in Your people, in believers, as a present experience: here is Your Word about it.' Bring it to the Lord; present it to Him, all that you can find; be very definite in this matter. We might see marvellous things, wonderful things, have a far greater testimony of resurrection life, if only we would be more definite about it. It is not just going to 'happen'; it is not going to be casual. Any dilly-dallying about this thing will not find us coming into the good of it. We must be positive; we must be definite; we must make this a very real matter.

For it is not just personal, for our own private good; the whole testimony of our Risen Lord is bound up with this. There is, of course, thank God, the personal application, and this may be either spiritual—for we are surely all, individually, in constant need of new accessions of life spiritually—or it may be physical. Blessed be God, that we can take life for our bodies! We may know resurrection life carrying us through impossible situations, physically. Or it may be that we need a new accession of life, the 'baring of His arm', in our ministry: for all ministry, if it is to be true spiritual ministry, has to be fulfilled in the power of His resurrection.

(b) FOR CORPORATE LIFE

But then, widening out beyond personal, individual need, it may apply to a company of the Lord's people of which we are a part, or in which we may have some responsibility. Things are going down into death, straitness and dishonour; the situation is not glorifying to the Lord; and we are greatly burdened with the need—Oh, that the Arm of the Lord might be revealed! Oh, that the power of resurrection might be manifested! What are you going to do about it? Well, it requires the same exercise. This resurrection of the Lord Jesus is for every aspect of the life of the believer and the Church.

But . . . it does not just happen. I say once again: we have got to take a very definite and positive attitude to this matter. If we will, and if we do, there are those who can testify, from a long history, that this really does work—that repeated miracles of sustenance and enablement and supply, of raising up and carrying on, will result again and again, from a definite laying hold of the fact that Christ is risen *for us*. He died for us—He is risen for us. He died in our place—He lives in our stead. He is the Living One!

T. A-S.

ON RESURRECTION GROUND

" . . . Abraham, who is the father of us all (as it is written, A father of many nations have I made thee) before him whom he believed, even God, who giveth life to the dead, and calleth the things that are not as though they were" (Romans iv. 17).

ABRAHAM is the pattern believer. He shows us that every true man of faith must find himself in vital association with the God "who giveth life to the dead". To be a believer means not only to accept the actual fact of Christ's resurrection and to claim benefits from it, but also to be oneself on resurrection ground—to be, as it were, a 'resurrection man'.

RESURRECTION GROUND IS GOD'S GROUND

This resurrection ground is the ground which God the Father takes with us. Do we long to know the reality of His fatherly love and purpose? For this, we must come up on to resurrection ground, for it is only at that ground that He knows us as His children. He has begotten us, imparted to us

His own life, "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (I Pet. i. 3). Finding us in death, He lifts us up on to a new plane of life by bringing us up into the realm of resurrection. God begins there, and He demands that we stay there.

Resurrection ground is Christ's ground. As believers, we are "in Christ", but this does not mean in the Christ who, as the Man Jesus, walked here on the earth in Gospel days. Nobody could be "in Christ" then. It was only when, by way of the Cross, He rose to resurrection ground that He could bring the believer "into" Himself, and know him in that new realm.

Resurrection ground is the Holy Spirit's ground. His power is the power of Christ's resurrection. Indeed, it was not until the new era of resurrection life had come that the Spirit was given in His fulness to the Church. Those early days of fulness were days when the great emphasis of all concerned was upon the Risen Christ, and upon the fact that it is in vital union with Him that the Spirit's power can be known. Resurrection ground, then, is God's ground.

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RESURRECTION GROUND IS SURE GROUND

Resurrection ground is unailing. It is certain ground. Nothing can keep us off that ground except our own unwillingness to enter it through the gateway of the Cross. Satan cannot prevent it. He does hinder in many things—even the Apostle Paul had to confess this—but there is one thing that he cannot do, and that is, keep us off resurrection ground. Circumstances may confine and limit us—or seem to do so—but they cannot hold us down from this resurrection union with Christ. Indeed, it was in the very prison which seemed so to hinder Paul's ministry that he wrote of being 'raised together with Him' and 'made to sit together with Him in heavenly places' (Eph. ii. 6). So, if we are not on resurrection ground, we must not blame circumstances or Satan. Nor must we blame our fellow-believers. Fellowship with others may involve us in difficulties, and from time to time seem to be a real hindrance; but, even if this is true, it is still a fact that nobody can prevent our having a personal life in the heavenlies in Christ. Whatever be the outward problems, we can, if we will, rise in our spirits on to resurrection ground, and nobody can drag us down.

It is the ground of unrestricted liberty. Think of the Lord Jesus, and of how wonderfully He was relieved of all that had previously sought to restrict Him, when once He was risen from the dead. How indifferent He now was to the Roman seals on the tomb; to the heavy stone placed before the entrance; to the closed doors of His disciples, or to the distance between Emmaus and Jerusalem. Once on the ground of resurrection He was in a realm where those things cannot hinder and do not count.

Above all, it is victory ground. Here all the foes are not merely powerless, they are already vanquished. We may find it a fight—a fight of faith—to get on to that ground, or to keep there; but once we are there the fight is already decided and the issue settled. There was a wonderful calm in the atmosphere of the forty days following Christ's resurrection. All His enemies were finally defeated. It is true that, after Pentecost, the fierce conflict was renewed; but, as the disciples were enabled to mount up in spirit to the ground of their Risen Lord, they themselves became "more than conquerors".

THE EXAMPLE OF ABRAHAM

We must be explicit, and seek to define what is meant by living on resurrection ground. For that

purpose, as has already been said, Abraham is our pattern, for he shows us what it means to be one who believes in the God who raises the dead. In his story we can observe three features of this life on resurrection ground.

(1) UTTERLY CAST ON GOD

In the first place, he continually found himself utterly cast on God. Everything was impossible for him naturally, and only became possible by an experience of resurrection power.

There were, of course, contradictions in Abraham's life. No doubt he learned by his mistakes, for we usually do learn in that way, but it is these very mistakes which enable us to see more clearly the ground which he had to take. While normally dependent on God, there were three occasions when he took things into his own hands, and so showed us that whenever we think that we can handle matters ourselves we are virtually off resurrection ground, and there is a complete hold-up until we recognise and forsake our error.

The first of these occasions came when, soon after his entry into the land of promise, he became involved in a famine (Gen. xii. 10–20). Instead of saying, 'Well, in any case, this is God's ground; it may seem impossible to live here, but that is His business, not mine', and continuing in quiet faith, he felt that he must act for himself. It so often does happen that when we enter a new realm of faith and obedience we are challenged, and alas! like Abram, we often panic and shift our ground. Abram went down into Egypt, and there became involved in a course of subterfuges and contradictions to faith, which brought about a complete failure of his testimony to the Lord. He had solved his immediate problems, and found plenty—Abraham actually grew richer while in Egypt; but, until he retraced his steps and got back on to God's ground, the whole purpose of God in his life was in jeopardy.

The second failure, and the worst, was when he and Sarai conspired together to help God produce a son—the son which He had promised them, but seemed unable to provide (Gen. xvi). Either they thought that God needed their assistance, or they thought that He needed hurrying up. These are two great evidences of the carnal mind: it cannot rely solely on God and it cannot wait for God's time. Interestingly enough, they still had to turn to Egypt, for Hagar, the mother of the false son of Abraham, was herself an Egyptian. There is no need here to dwell on the immediate distress, nor on the tragedy of the centuries, which this strength of the flesh brought about.

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On the third occasion, Abraham and Sarah again got into the same dishonest practice of pretending to be brother and sister. This was just before Isaac was born (Gen. xx). They were not even in Egypt; there was no actual reason for Abraham's fears; but still, in a moment of unbelief, he again felt that this was a reasonable precaution which he should take.

Happily such a spirit was not usual in this man of God. These three failures only serve to show by contrast what his true ground was. These were lapses; normally he was one who was content to have everything dependent on the Lord, and to wait for the Lord to do the work. This is what it means to be on resurrection ground. If anyone imagines that it is unpractical, they must look again at Abraham's life and its outcome through the centuries. No man has ever been father of so much as Abraham.

(2) ACCEPTANCE OF GOD'S DENIALS

Secondly, resurrection ground for Abraham meant that he had to find a way of being in harmony with God's constant denials. Again and again the Lord said 'No!' to him. After all, resurrection follows death, and every new experience of it can only be the result of a new application of the death of the Cross. Some disappointment, some hope that dies, some plan that is vetoed, some support removed—all this represents God's refusal to let us have our own way. If we can accept it, we shall find ourselves in a new enjoyment of resurrection fulness.

Seven times over, God said 'No!' to Abraham, and each time he had to accept that denial. We are robbed of our resurrection power when we resent and resist the Divine application of death to our flesh. If, however, we find grace to accept His refusals, as Abraham did, like Abraham we shall pass from one experience of blessing to another.

It was in Ur of the Chaldees that the Lord first said 'No!' (Gen. xi. 31a), and He said it concerning natural ambitions. In a society where everybody sought personal advantage and earthly possessions—a society just like our own in that respect—Abraham must have had just as much desire for these things, for the comforts and luxury of home, as the rest. But to him God had said 'No!', and to Abram's eternal credit he fell into line with the will of God, and left it all.

When the family reached Haran, roughly half-way, they stopped there: for that was the sort of man Abram's father was—a half-way man (Gen. xi. 31b, 32). Even when we have come out of the world and moved on in the obedience of faith,

there is always a temptation to stop half-way. In Abram's case, most of his family did this. And on the whole they found Haran pleasant and profitable. This may seem all wrong to us, that a half-way position should be like that; but the fact remains that it often is. And, for that very reason, we, like Abram, do not find it easy when the Lord again says 'No!' and urges us to move on. 'But most others are staying here! And what is more, they are happy and enjoying blessing! Why cannot I be like them?' These are the kind of arguments which we put to the Lord. He only says to us, as He did to Abram: 'No! This is not for you!' Happily Abram accepted this denial and moved on (Gen. xii. 4, 5).

Then, when they were in the land, and he and Lot were faced with the inevitable need for dividing up, Abram, as a normal human being, must have looked with longing eyes at the attractive, fertile Jordan valley (Gen. xiii. 1-12). Why should Lot have the best of everything, and Abram, his senior, have to let it go? It did not seem fair. This call to give place, to let go, to hold nothing for ourselves, comes as one of the most constant challenges to all true believers. We ask: 'Why should I?' Well, Abram let go, and from the longer viewpoint we can see that his was the right choice. Once again it brought him on to resurrection ground, as it always does when we refuse to grasp any personal advantage.

Fourthly, when the king of Sodom came out and offered his gifts after the great battle, Abram had to say 'No!' to this world's favours. Would that every other spiritual victor had been able to do the same! 'I have lift up my hand to the Lord God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take a thread nor a shoelatchet, nor ought that is thine' (Gen. xiv. 22, 23). No favours from the world. That was why the early Church was on resurrection ground! And that is why the Church of our day knows so little of resurrection power.

Then Abram had to say 'No!' to Ishmael (Gen. xvii. 15-22). Poor Sarai! She was the one who had suggested this expedient. No sooner had she counselled it than she had a violent reaction. That is what our souls are like—one minute acting on impulse, and the next realising our folly. But it was too late! The step was taken. Yet it was not too late to repudiate it. For the next thirteen years Abram still had a sneaking hope that perhaps God would accept this spiritual substitute, and to the last prayed: 'O that Ishmael might live before Thee' (Gen. xvii. 18). The Lord, however, said 'No!' No substitutes, no efforts of the flesh. In

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spite of himself Abram took God's side, and ceased to press the claims of Ishmael.

Then came Isaac's birth, and the time when Sarah insisted that they should not even live together. "Cast out this bondwoman and her son", she insisted; and we are told that "the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight" (Gen. xxi. 10, 11). We must not imagine that Abraham enjoyed agreeing with the Lord's denials, any more than we do. It was bad enough to have Ishmael set aside, but now he had to say 'No!' to any mixture in the home—Ishmael had to be banished. So we notice a progressive costliness about the way of self-denial. We do not know how much it cost Abram to leave Ur, or Haran, or the plains of Jericho; but it seems that on each occasion the denial was deeper—it was something more costly, more prized, which had to be forsaken, if he were to continue in the way of enlargement.

So we come to the seventh and last of his costly denials: he had to say 'No!' even to his beloved Isaac (Gen. xxii). Isaac had been God-given, wholly of God, a veritable miracle from Heaven. How hard it must have been, then, for Abraham, not only to let him go, but actually with his own hands to lay Isaac on the altar. The Lord spared him nothing, save the last actual plunge of the knife. And so the man of faith is found to be a man in complete harmony with the will of God, even in its most costly demands. And every new death that he died was made an occasion of a new experience of resurrection fullness.

(3) CONSTANT NEWNESS AND INCREASE

The third characteristic of the believer on resurrection ground is constant newness and increase. If we were to follow up the story of the seven experiences of death to self in the life of Abraham, which we have just considered, we should find that after each renunciation there came into his life some fresh experience of fullness. In the first two cases, at Ur and at Haran, it seems that God gave the promises before Abram obeyed. He always helps us in the early stages of our life of faith. Subsequently, however, it was only after Abraham had accepted the Lord's 'No!' that he received the fuller blessing.

This happened after he had given way to Lot over the choice of territory: "And the Lord said unto Abram, *after* that Lot was separated from him . . ." He did not speak words of condolence or pity but of prospect. "Lift up *now* thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art . . ." To

men's judgment a place of renunciation, of limitation or of loss; but—"Look!" "Northward and southward and eastward and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it . . ." (Gen. xiii. 14, 15). To let go to God always means enlargement.

Again, when Abram had refused the gifts from the king of Sodom, we are told that: "*After these things* the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward" (Gen. xv. 1). The important word is 'exceeding'. Although he had renounced something, in exchange for it he was to receive that which excelled. There is an excellency for those who are prepared to suffer the loss of all things for the Lord's sake. Again God called him to look, this time upwards: "Look now toward heaven . . . So shall thy seed be" (v. 5). Upward there is this realm of expansion and infinite reward, and it is for the man who is prepared, through death to self, to come up on to resurrection ground.

It was when Abram accepted God's refusal to acknowledge Ishmael, and believed for Isaac, that the Lord appeared to him again with fresh promises of fullness. "I . . . will multiply thee exceedingly" (Gen. xvii. 2). "And I will make thee exceedingly fruitful . . ." (v. 6). This is the chapter which tells of the changes of name: Abram now becomes Abraham and Sarai is now Sarah, and royal expectations are announced: "Kings shall come out of thee" (vv. 6 and 16). This is the future for those who turn from their own efforts to bring about the will of God, accept the Divine veto on all that is of their flesh, and commit themselves wholly to Him. They are led into royal destinies.

Finally, we have to consider the outcome of the offering of Isaac on Mount Moriah. For Abraham personally, it led on into the last and most fruitful period of his life. But we see far beyond that. We see Israel, and David, the Temple and the glory of the kingdom. More, we see Christ, the promised 'Seed', and the multitudes of the faithful who are all sons of Abraham in the Spirit. We pass from Abraham's 'lamb' to the Lamb of God, and reach the glorious culmination of all in the Marriage of the Lamb. There seems to be no end to the spiritual significance of that great act of renunciation.

Here, then, is the way by which spiritual values can be kept fresh, and here, too, is the secret of their constant increase. By those and for those who pass through death on to resurrection ground, it is all made possible.

H. F.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

"BECAUSE HE SAW HIS GLORY"

I. THE ANSWER TO DISILLUSIONMENT

"While ye have the light, believe on the light, that ye may become sons of light.

These things spake Jesus, and he departed and hid himself from them" (or: "was hidden from them"). "But though he had done so many signs before them, yet they believed not on him: that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake,

Lord, who hath believed our report?

And to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?

For this cause they could not believe, for that Isaiah said again,

He hath blinded their eyes, and he hardened their heart;

Lest they should see with their eyes, and perceive with their heart,

And should turn,

And I should heal them.

These things said Isaiah, because he saw his glory; and he spake of him." (John xii. 36 - 41.)

IN this double reference to the prophecies of Isaiah, there is very little difficulty in relating the former of the two to the Lord Jesus. Isaiah liii is taken for granted by most as referring to Him. We know the content of that wonderful chapter. But it has not been so commonly recognised that, according to the words that we have quoted from John's Gospel, Isaiah chapter vi is just as definitely related to the Lord Jesus.

That chapter, as we know, contains the commission of the prophet to go and do what is mentioned here: "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest . . ."—and so on; and John says that Isaiah said these things, 'because he saw His glory, and spake of Him.' That One, "high and lifted up", whose "train filled the temple", was, if this Scripture is true, none other than the Lord Jesus. It is a most impressive statement, this, that Isaiah said these things—not 'when he saw His glory', although that is true—but 'because he saw His glory'. The effect of the vision was seen in his utterance. What he saw became his life-work and message.

In this event, or crisis, then, in Isaiah's life, to which John refers, the prophet saw *Christ's* glory.

And so our occupation is to be with the vision of the exalted Lord: its character, and its effect, or consequence.

GOD'S ULTIMATE PURPOSE:
THE SECURING OF A PEOPLE

But before going further, I want to say something by way of bringing quite definitely into view what it is we have before us. It is something which needs to be said again, and with renewed definiteness and strength. It is a matter of the greatest importance that we should realise that, while the Lord is seeking to save people in this world, and to conform the saved to the image of Christ, He is all the time doing these things with the object of *securing a people as a vessel for a consummate purpose.*

The saving and the building up are not the *ends* to which God is working, as ends in themselves. They are but *ways and means* to an end. All through the ages—and this is a thing which, I should say, it is impossible not to see in the Bible throughout—God has been in quest of a people, with a view to making them a vessel and the instrument of a purpose which lies along the line of their salvation, and their constitution. If this truth, this fact, of an all-governing purpose is not recognised, there will always be a serious constitutional deficiency, weakness and limitation, in the Christian life and in the Christian work. There will be frustration and defeat in the Church, if it is not dominated by this outstanding reality, that God is doing everything in relation to a purpose.

So, while with all our hearts we are committed to evangelism, and committed with all our hearts to helping people in the Christian life, if we have any more of 'heart' to add to that, it is in relation to God having a vessel, a people—not individual Christians, as saved and growing spiritually, but a *people*—to serve Him in relation to that full purpose of His heart.

God's purpose, of course, has many aspects and many phases. God has moved down the ages in what we may call a 'phasic', or 'phaseal', way. The different parts of the whole have required, for their introduction or their recovery, particular instruments and special emphases. That is perfectly clear in the instruments that God Himself has chosen. The prophets represent different aspects of

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God's purpose. They are all, shall we say, different voices in the choir. Jeremiah, for instance, may be the profound bass, the deep rumbling of God's judgment, yet from a broken heart; Isaiah may be the tenor, clear as a bird; Ezekiel may be the baritone, between the two and combining the two. I think you will find that there is some truth in those definitions.

But they are all parts of the one great choir, and they are all occupied with one theme; and the one theme of all the prophets, all the voices, all the instrumentalities of the Scriptures, is: God's full thought concerning a people for His Son, a people by whom His Son will administer His eternal kingdom.

We must honour every voice, and every note, and every instrumentality that God raises up. We must recognise that God has variety. In His sovereignty He has a right to choose and to use what He will. There is no place for any rivalries or jealousies. But it is very necessary for us, as one instrumentality among many, to know what *our* note is, and just where *we* stand in this sovereign 'working of all things after the counsel of His own will' (Eph. i. 11).

So, the word at the commencement of these meditations is this. We are not here just presenting some special messages on some special subject, however good or valuable that might be. Our meditations are to be in relation to the whole purpose of God, and it is that purpose which must dominate.

Now, perhaps you do not recognise the point of that. It is possible—so possible, that it becomes in a very large way actual—to enjoy the teaching, and all the accompaniments of it, to enjoy the benefits and the values, and to say: 'Well, I find a great deal of help or blessing in that'; and yet not to have recognised the fundamental meaning of it, as to just why the help or blessing is found. Why do we find the Lord in it? Why the life? Why the light? Why all this that we are enjoying? It is not just something in itself. I venture to say that that very well might not be so, but for the fundamental purpose. It all springs out of that. And it is of the greatest importance that we should not just be deriving blessings and benefits, enjoying ourselves with the fruit, but should ourselves be part of the very *root* of the thing, and the root of the thing should be in us.

So, if you can say to your own heart: 'Well, I have found blessing, I have found help; I like to read the messages; I meet the Lord in them', perhaps that may challenge you—and I hope it does—to ask yourself: Why? why? Let me say again

quite clearly: It lies in the very object for which this instrumentality has been brought into being by God Himself. We must understand that.

Forgive these solemn and somewhat fierce words, but we must get right to the heart of this. And so we are led to this vision which the prophet Isaiah had. We begin by taking some account of *this* instrument, *this* vessel—Isaiah himself.

NOT MEN, BUT INSTRUMENTS

We need to realise that, when we are reading these books—the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and others—we are not just reading history—either history actually, or history prophetically, predictively. You can read your Bible like that. You can be occupied with the phrase 'In the times of Moses', or 'In the times of the kings', or 'In the times of the prophets' . . . and so read it as history. Or you might read it as biography: Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah and the rest. But I want to impress this upon you—you *must not read your Bible just in that way*. After all, what is the real value of the Bible if it is no more than history or biography? You must read your Bible—and I am thinking at the moment particularly of Isaiah—in the light of *instrumentalities in relation to one persistent purpose*. The purpose is one right from the beginning; it persists all the way through the ages; and these people—these men, and this nation—are only in view at all, they only have their being, their place, and their name, because they are instruments, chosen and raised up of God, in relation to that one persistent purpose.

We must be very clear about this. We must have it very definitely in our minds, when we read our Bible, that these are not necessarily 'men', *as such*, at all. They have a great name—yes: Abraham has a great name, and so has Moses, and so has David, and so have the prophets. They have a name, and we call them by their name. But we need to realise that it is not the office, but the *function*, that gives the value and the significance to anybody in the Bible. God did not just choose an Isaiah, as a *man*; God chose an *instrument* for His purpose, and that instrument, shall we say, 'happened' to be Isaiah. It is not something official; it is something which represents a spiritual function, an instrumentality.

In the workshop of God—and it is a very big one—there are numerous instruments. God has His design before Him. And in relation to that design—for different parts, for different aspects, at different times, in different places—He selects His instruments. It is in relation to that particular part

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of the whole. Well, it does not matter whether He calls that instrument by a certain name, does it? That really does not matter at all. If you were in a workshop with a master-workman, he might point to something and simply say, 'I want that', without giving it its name at all. If you knew the names of these different instruments, he might mention the name and say: 'Bring me so-and-so'. But he would very likely point to the thing and say: 'I want that for the moment; give me that.' It is the purpose that it is to serve, not the name that belongs to it, that gives it any significance at all.

Do you see the point? In the workshop of God, the instrumentalities, and the purpose for which they have been brought in, are the things that matter. It is not the labels that you put on them, not the names that you give them—that is man's way of doing things. It is the purpose that they serve. And as for Isaiah—well, we must call him something; he must be known by some name, because he served the purpose; but it is not his biography, it is not his place in history—it is his spiritual function, his spiritual purpose, the *spiritual principle* that he embodies, that is *the* thing. Men try to make names for themselves, get a reputation, be placarded as of some importance. God is not a little bit interested in that: all that matters to God is the purpose that they serve. Our names are written in heaven, and that is the very best place for them. Men want to have them written up large on earth. God writes our names in heaven. We may not know our name until we get there. But, when we have enunciated the principle, we do not forget that Bible names were so often a synonym for the bearers' work.

Now, when you come to this sixth chapter of Isaiah, you meet with a man. But, before long, you find yourself not in the presence of the man Isaiah at all: you find the man falling down, dropping away, as it were, and crying: "Woe is me". It is the exalted Lord who is in view: everything now is focused upon Him, everything now is related to Him. All is concerned with Him—"the Lord, high and lifted up". And all purpose is centred in Him, not in Isaiah or anyone else. He comes to dominate the situation.

A TRANSITION FROM EARTHLY TO HEAVENLY

That may sound like a simple statement. But as we go on, we shall see that it is a fact of the greatest significance. Isaiah says: "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord . . ." When we come

to that presently, we shall see that this marks a tremendous transition. From something that was big, great, important, dominating, fascinating in this world, there is now a transition to something far greater—to Heaven itself.

The meaning of it all is—that *which is above*. The whole explanation of Isaiah or of any other man—be he one of the 'major' prophets, be he any great name in the Bible—is that Throne, that exalted Lord. And so the Apostle John wrote: 'Isaiah said these things because he saw *His* glory'. He said 'these things'. It was not just that Isaiah said *some* of the things that are contained here, in the commission of the Lord. The whole life of this man, and *all* his ministry, right on to the end, right to the end of this book, came out of his having 'seen His glory'. What a law that is for life, for ministry—'because he saw His glory'!

We shall have more to say about that when we speak of the results. But what we are to be impressed with, right at the outset, is this: that it is not the men, not the instrumentalities, that matter; it is the purpose. And, from Heaven's standpoint, *we* are greater or smaller, according to *our* oneness with that purpose. *Our* significance is in proportion to *our* vital relationship with that purpose: that is, that His glory should fill the whole earth. That is, as you know, a part of the statement of the seraphim in the vision: "the whole earth is full of his glory" (Is. vi. 3). As you will see from the margin of the Revised Version, the Hebrew is literally: 'the fulness of the whole earth is his glory'. The earth is the place for the fulness of *His* glory. That is God's purpose for the place of His Son. So the man must go out, become insignificant, and cry 'Woe!' Any instrumentality that does not correspond to the glory of Christ must fall down and be adjusted.

'Because he saw His glory'—that explains Isaiah. The Lord never chooses persons *as such*, whoever they may be. The choice is governed by purpose. God does not choose anyone just as a person. He does not even choose instrumentalities as things in themselves. There is a sovereignty about God's choice. Very often He chooses something that is altogether without reputation, or standing, or acceptance; something altogether rejected by men. He has His purpose in view all the time.

And if He does choose a man like Paul, with great natural gifts and abilities, He will deal with that vessel in such a way as to make him know—whatever other people may say about him or think about him—that before God he is nothing. It is not what other people say about a person: it is

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what that person knows himself or herself to be in the presence of God. There is no man, I think, who was more in agreement with Isaiah in crying: "Woe is me", than the Apostle Paul. For indeed he did cry that—"Woe is me"—"O wretched man that I am!" (Rom. vii. 24). It is not that God is looking for big men or important people, *as such*. He needs men, he needs women, he needs people; but He is looking for an instrument—an instrument that is in perfect harmony with the purpose that He has in hand.

INSTRUMENTS SHAPED TO THE PURPOSE

That carries us a bit further. The instrument must be one that is shaped according to the purpose. It has had to be forged and formed in fire; shaped to the purpose for which it has been sovereignly chosen. And that means a long secret history between God and His vessel. You cannot just go out and preach 'truths', give out in a second-hand way about the things of God. The Lord have mercy upon us all in this; it explains so much. But when real purpose *is* governing, the thing has got to go through us, and we have got to go through it. The instrument has to be shaped and formed according to the purpose of its election.

And I am not thinking only of individual instrumentalities. It is equally true of collective instrumentalities—a people. If they are vitally related to the purpose, they will go through the truth, and it will go through them. They will not get away with mere doctrine, mere mental grasp of things. They will go through it. And they will either draw out, because it is too hot and too difficult, or they will yield, and allow God to form according to the purpose. To be a part of such a people, such an instrument, such a vessel (and it does not mean that you need all be in the same place, but wherever you are), means that God is going to keep very close accounts with you in the light of purpose. And this thing is going to reach into your life, wherever you are; and you are going to have experiences—strange experiences—that you would never have, but for that purpose.

When the Lord chooses vessels—be they individuals, or be they collective—they may go through experiences of very deep perplexity, of great disappointment, of much disillusionment, even to the point of utter hopelessness. It was true of the prophets, it was true of Paul. Everything may at times appear to be hopeless, and that is no exaggeration. The measure of your vision will determine the measure of your experience. To see in great dimensions is to have experiences of great heights

and *great depths*. Paul knew what it meant to 'despair of life'; to touch great depths of death in order to touch the greater depth of the power of his resurrection.

GOD MAKES ALL PROVISION

But note: although such vessels or instruments may go that way—and I am keeping close to the book all the time—He meets those vessels with what is necessary for the fulfilment of the purpose of their election. Here is Isaiah: I ask you, why five chapters of tragedy before chapter vi?

Why was the vision given? It was given because the situation, from every human standpoint, was a hopeless one. Man could well despair when king Uzziah died. The tragedy of king Uzziah! We will speak about him again in a moment. And the state of things in Uzziah's day! It brought this prophet to utter despair. And then, just think what it is that he has to do: 'Make this people's ears heavy . . . close their eyes . . . lest they should see and hear, and understand and believe, and return . . .' (vi. 10). What a life-work! What a hopeless prospect!

To be able to face a situation like that and go through with it, a man needs some vision of a Throne above. This vision was God's meeting of the need of a chosen vessel, in relation to His purpose, in a day when things were as dark and as well-nigh hopeless as they could be. Yes, God meets the need, which arises out of the very situation to be dealt with; God has His provision, and He makes it. Sometimes, with our biggest questions, our most awful disillusionment, our deepest despair and hopelessness, we seem to touch bottom, and we say: 'Is it possible, this great purpose of God concerning the Church? Is it really possible?' And then the Lord gives a new opening of the eyes of our heart concerning His Throne, His position above all, His glory, and we go on again—until it all comes back, and we touch bottom once more! That is the history of such a vessel.

THE PERILS OF BLESSING

Now, all this is contained in this incident in chapter six. Isaiah's life, up to the time of the vision, had been entirely related to king Uzziah (otherwise known as Azariah). Perhaps for at least twenty-five years—the last twenty-five years of Uzziah's life, out of the fifty-two years of his reign—Isaiah was completely under the shadow of this man. You can read about it in II Chronicles xxvi. What a beginning Uzziah had!—a grand beginning, a great beginning; so full of promise. Every-

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thing seemed to be set fair for a glorious period of history. Isaiah was brought up in that. The triumphs of Uzziah brought the nation and the kingdom, geographically, almost back to the limits of Solomon's reign—that is, to the limits of the covenant made to Abraham. It was a wonderful reign.

As I say, there is no doubt that this young man—you can see from his writings that he was an idealist—was under the fascination of this great man, this wonderful man, Uzziah; he overshadowed everything for him. Isaiah's life was wrapped up with that of the king. God blessed Uzziah, and prospered him, and gave him victory, and gave him territory: "his name spread far abroad, for he was marvellously helped . . ." And then . . . and then . . . tragedy of tragedies—read it: "But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up so that he did corruptly, and he trespassed against the Lord his God; for he went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense" (II Chron. xxvi. 15, 16).

How much we could say about the perils of prosperity, the perils of popularity, the perils of blessing—even God's blessing! And how much we could say about the unsafety of the best of men. How unreliable we are—I mean 'we men'! How dangerous it is for God to entrust us with blessing! There is much in that. The point is that there came this moment, this turning-point in Uzziah's life, when, with all the good that there had been, with all the blessing and enlargement that God had given him, he assumed something—and then he presumed.

It is like so many things, and so many people—yes, so many instrumentalities: a good beginning, bidding fair to accomplish some great thing for the glory of God, with much Divine blessing, and much Divine enlargement; and then . . . at a certain almost imperceptible point, it becomes something in itself, and begins to trade upon its position, upon its reputation—even trade upon the blessing of God! There comes in a secret pride of having become something—of course for the Lord, and by the blessing of the Lord; assuming that the blessing of the Lord overlooks secret sin, and presuming upon that; spiritual pride creeping in. That is the history of Uzziah; and that is the history of many a greatly blessed and used instrumentality of God.

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Uzziah, then, presuming upon his position and God's blessing, as we see, committed this presump-

tuous act: he went into the Holy Place, where the Altar of Incense was, to offer incense. The high priest, with eighty other priests, implored him, begged him, warned him, telling him in most definite terms that that was neither his place nor his office. The priesthood saw through the act to the spiritual significance—presumption. And then, as he stood there, censer in hand, ready to offer the incense, with his anger rising, God smote him! The leprosy broke out upon his face, and the priests made haste to thrust him out of the Temple; and from that day to the day of his death he lived in a leper house—a leper!

What about Isaiah?—the man who had been living, fascinated, under the shadow of all the preceding glory; to whom Uzziah had been the very model, the life dominating his whole horizon? Here is his idol shattered! He knows that that man is in a leper asylum for the rest of his life!

Do you see the significance of this vision? "*Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord . . .*"

For a ministry like this, to serve God's full purpose, you must be horizoned by nothing less than that One on the Throne. You must have no other vision; no fascination or heart-captivation with that which, under testing and under trial, will break down—and will let you down. It is very necessary, in order to fulfil this purpose, that we get away from earth and from men, and get to the only Man—the Man in Heaven. Everything for Isaiah was saved by that vision. How he might have been shattered! How devastating this whole thing would have been finally for this young man, if he had not seen Another, whose glory eclipsed the human glory which, up to that time, had been the greatest glory of which he knew. Such a vision is a tremendous thing for our deliverance in the day of disillusionment.

DELIVERANCE IN DISILLUSIONMENT

For we shall all undoubtedly suffer much disillusionment as we go on. There may be great Bible teachers, and great figures in the Christian world, whom we admire. I have done that: I have been a young man, and have done my hero-worshipping of the great Bible teachers, the great leaders, the great Christian statesmen, and so on. And I have lived to know that you dare not put your trust in men—in "princes". You will find, sooner or later, that, at best, that is not safe ground. And while, in many cases, it is not a matter of sin, yet, in many cases, the Lord does allow these 'idols' in the end to pass out under a shadow.

The point is that you may come to a time when

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you are disillusioned, when you discover the human weaknesses and defects in those you thought were absolutely trustworthy and reliable. And many people to-day are out in the shadows, out in some backwater, in their Christian lives, because of becoming disillusioned or disappointed with certain Christians, or certain things. They looked for, and thought they had found, perfection, and they discovered they had not.

Now this is a contingency, a possibility, that we have got to face. If we have not really seen the Lord Jesus as the answer, if our anchorage is not firmly in Heaven with Him, we shall be shattered in that day, and our faith will break down. What we need is this seeing of the exalted Lord and His glory; and this seeing is essential to our salvation, not only as believers in God, but for those of us who are Christian workers, in order to get us through. If we have not seen the significance and the meaning of the Man in the Throne, we shall just go to pieces under the duress of disillusionment and disappointment.

That does not mean—God forbid!—that we should develop a spirit of mistrust about servants of God, and be always looking for their faults, watching where they are going to break down. God forbid that there should be anything of that. At

the same time, whatever we may think about God's servants, let us remember that they are but frail vessels, and that, if we are to go through and fulfil God's purpose, it is necessary that we should have seen the only infallible One, the only One who can really be relied upon never to disappoint. The Lord Jesus will never be the occasion of a disillusionment—never!

Now, you see, Isaiah had been related to Uzziah in this way: enamoured, fascinated, captivated. And then he became involved. Disillusioned, stripped and denuded, in such a day he needs something: he needs saving, he needs rescuing; he needs hope; he needs, in the midst of the wreckage, to see purpose. The purpose has not gone; it is not all in vain, not all hopeless. The God who had called him in relation to His purpose, met his need; and so the vision was his salvation—and his ministry.

We leave it there for the time being. Let us remind ourselves that we are not talking about Isaiah, we are not talking about Uzziah; we are not talking about the prophecies of Isaiah; we are not talking about the vision that Isaiah was given. We are talking about Another, whom John says Isaiah saw: 'he saw *His* glory'—the glory of our Lord Jesus.

T. A-S.

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

THE LOST SIXPENCE

WHEN the morning meeting was over, Jimmy said goodbye to his mother and went off with his grandparents to their home. His mother had arranged this because she had to visit a sick friend in hospital, and Jimmy was happy enough about the plan, for his grandmother always made sure that he had a good time when he went there.

As a matter of fact, he had such a good time that he was almost sorry to go off to Sunday School. But just before he left, his grandfather asked him if they had a Missionary Box at the school. When Jimmy replied that they had, Grandfather took two sixpences from his purse, saying: 'Here is one sixpence for the box, and one for you to do what you like with.' Then he added one of those jokes that grown-ups seem to think so funny, saying with a laugh: 'Now mind you don't get them mixed up, James. You must put them in different pockets.'

Jimmy didn't think that this was at all funny, but he was polite as well as being obedient, so he put one coin in one pocket of his grey shorts and

the other in the pocket on the other side. And this was the cause of all the trouble! As he was getting near the Hall he suddenly remembered that there was a hole in one of his pockets. He clapped his hand to his left side, but to his dismay could feel no coin there. He plunged his hand into the pocket, and sure enough, the sixpence had gone. It was only a small hole, that was why he had said nothing about it to his mother, but it was big enough for a sixpence to fall through. Horrified, Jimmy felt the other pocket, but that was all right. The sixpence lay safely there.

Now Jimmy was faced with a truly difficult problem. Which sixpence had he lost? Was it the one given to the Lord's work, or was it his own? He tried hard to remember what Grandfather had said. Had he said that the one in the left-hand pocket was for the Lord? Or that the right pocket one was his own? Jimmy was an honest boy, and he had to admit to himself that nothing of this kind had been said. It was he, and he alone, who must make the decision. And by the time he

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reached Sunday School he still did not know the answer to this big question.

Jimmy sang the hymns without thinking of what he was singing, for he was still puzzling over which sixpence he had lost. For some time he had been saving up to buy a pair of roller skates, and he only needed another two and sixpence to complete the price. So sixpence meant a lot to him. First he thought that he would keep the money for himself. Then he was not sure whether this was honest. He kept asking himself what was the right thing to do. As the battle went on in his mind, he paid very little attention to the lesson, which was something about Elijah and a widow's cruse. Right at the end, the teacher said, very clearly: 'So you see that it is always right to put the Lord first.'

Always right to put the Lord first! Jimmy heard that well enough, and, what is more, he knew that it was the answer to his question. So when the class was over he dropped the sixpence into the box and set off for home with his friend Silas. Perhaps he ought to have felt happy, now that he had made this sacrifice, but actually he felt sad. His sadness was only made worse when Silas announced that with next Saturday's pocket money he expected to have enough to buy his roller skates, and that his father had promised to take him to the shop to get them. Poor Jimmy! He had done the right thing, of that he was sure, but he found it hard to think that, after all, he would still have to wait for his skates.

Mother welcomed him home, told him of her visit to the hospital, and gave him his tea. Then an unusual thing happened: his grandfather called in on his way to the evening meeting. At first Mother was afraid that he had some complaint to

make about Jimmy's behaviour at lunch, but nothing was said to her. However, as soon as she went out of the room, Grandfather turned to him and asked: 'James, have you got a hole in your pocket?' Jimmy turned red and had to admit that he had, though he added that it was only a small one. He could not imagine how his grandfather knew about it. He soon understood, though, when Grandfather took out a sixpence, telling Jimmy that it must have fallen straight through his pocket on to the carpet, where Grandmother had found it after he had gone off to Sunday School. 'Never mind', said Grandfather, 'I will put it in the box this evening.' Jimmy's face fell. Was he to be robbed of his hopes a second time? Seeing his face, Grandfather asked him: 'You haven't lost your sixpence too, have you?' Then Jimmy explained that it was his own which had been lost, and that he had put the other one into the box.

Grown-ups do strange things. Instead of giving a pleased smile, Grandfather looked as if he were going to cry, and began to blow his nose violently. However, he soon changed to a smile, and putting the sixpence back into his purse he took out a shiny half-crown. 'You had better have this, James', he said, 'it is bigger and won't slip through that hole.'

As he said good-night, Jimmy's grandfather told him that he hoped that he would always put the Lord first in his life. That was what the teacher had said: 'It is always right to put the Lord first.' Grandfather was closing the gate, when it suddenly dawned on Jimmy that this two and sixpence completed the amount needed for his roller skates! He would not even have to wait until Saturday like Silas.

H. F.

FELLOWSHIP

"God is faithful, by whom you have been called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (I Corinthians i. 9).

"That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, that which we contemplated, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life (and the life has been manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and report to you the eternal life, which was with the Father, and has been manifested to us); that which we have seen and heard we report to you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and our fellowship is indeed with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ: and these things write

we unto you that your joy may be full" (I John i. 1-4).

"And they persevered in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles, in the breaking of bread and the prayers. And fear was upon every soul: and many wonders and signs took place through the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common, and sold their possessions and substance, and distributed them to all, according as anyone might have need. And every day, being constantly in the temple, with one accord, and breaking bread in the house, they received their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the

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people. And the Lord added daily them that were to be saved" (Acts ii. 42 - 47).

"And the heart and soul of the multitude of those that had believed were one: and not one said that anything that he possessed was his own; but all things were common to them. And with great power did the apostles give witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all" (Acts iv. 32, 33).

(The above readings are from the Darby translation.)

I believe that the word 'fellowship' is a very precious word. In these days it is a word that has been used very widely; it has become a very popular word. In the United States, we have the Fellowship of This, and the Fellowship of That; it seems that everything is termed a 'fellowship' nowadays. And yet I am afraid that gradually this word 'fellowship' has lost its true meaning. Do we really know what 'fellowship' is? How many 'fellowships' are there on this earth? What is the meaning of 'the teaching and fellowship of the apostles'? Are we in that fellowship? I think these are very practical questions, to which we need to give our thoughts and consideration.

In the book of the Acts, chapter ii, we find that those early believers—those who received the Lord on the Day of Pentecost—"continued in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles". I believe we all know something of the 'teaching of the apostles', but do we know to-day the 'fellowship of the apostles'? The teaching of the apostles, as we know very definitely, is not something other than the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ. The apostles tell us of our Lord. It is our Lord Jesus Himself who is the teaching of the apostles. We accept that, and we know that we should continue in their teaching.

But are we sure that we know what is the meaning of 'the fellowship of the apostles'? Are we sure that we are 'in the fellowship of the apostles'? are we sure that to-day we 'continue' in that fellowship? What is the fellowship of the apostles? As the teaching of the apostles is the same as the teaching of our Lord Himself, so the fellowship of the apostles cannot be another fellowship. There is only one fellowship in the Bible; it is the fellowship of the Father and of His Son Jesus Christ. And we are "called into the fellowship of his Son", our Lord Jesus Christ. The fellowship of the apostles cannot be other than that.

There is a very precious fellowship between the Father and the Son, and it is from eternity—it is an eternal fellowship. It is a fellowship of life, because the Father and the Son share one life. It is a fellowship in the Spirit: it is not an external association; it is not something that is outward; it is not something that has to be arranged and brought into being by discussion, or agreement, or conference, or committee, or pact, or anything of that sort. It is a fellowship in the Spirit—inward fellowship.

We know, too, that that fellowship between the Father and the Son is without any shadow, without any shade. There is perfect confidence between the Father and the Son. The Father can, and does, trust the Son with everything—with all His plans, His purposes, His counsel, His work. The Father is not afraid to trust His Son; He is not afraid to commit Himself to His Son. And so it is with the Son toward the Father. The Son has perfect faith in the Father; He never doubts the Father. He may go through many trials, valleys of shadows of death, and yet we find there is always that radiant confidence in the Father. When He was here on earth, He never questioned His Father, or His Father's wisdom; He knew that His Father was in Him, and with Him. There is a perfect trust and confidence—no doubt, no fear, nothing of such thought, but perfect rest and peace between the Father and the Son. This is the eternal fellowship—the fellowship—the fellowship of the Father and of His Son Jesus Christ.

But it is the will of God that this blessed fellowship is not to be limited to the Godhead. He wants to enlarge that fellowship, to widen that fellowship—He wants to include man in that fellowship. I do not know why God wants to do that. It is something mysterious, something beyond our understanding, that God should want man to be included in His blessed and eternal fellowship. I can only say that it is the love of God. His love is so great that He wants to bring man into that blessed fellowship.

This is the reason why He sent His Son to this earth. He sent His Son to this earth, in order that He might bring man into this fellowship. And this is why we find, in First Corinthians, that we are 'called into the fellowship of His Son'. When Christ was on this earth, in the form of a man, He was trying to bring that fellowship, that heavenly fellowship, into man, and He was trying to bring man into His fellowship. We are not only saved that our sins may be forgiven, that we may escape the penalty of sin, but we are definitely called into something very positive: we are called

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into the fellowship of God's Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. And when man is included in that fellowship, we find that term, 'the fellowship of the apostles'.

Now, apostles are men; but they are chosen, they are called, they are gathered into that eternal fellowship. We remember that, when the Lord called the apostles, we find it is written in the Scriptures, that He chose these men "that they might be with him" (Mark iii. 14). The Lord's first desire is that they should be with Him, and then He wants to send them out to 'preach the Gospel, to heal diseases, and to cast out demons'. They are called and chosen to be 'with' Christ—just to be *with* Him. In other words, you find that the first thought of our Lord Jesus is not to send them out. His first thought is that they may be with Him. He wants them to be united with Him, to enter into that blessed fellowship that He had with the Father in eternity. To be with Him!

And these apostles are representative. They represent those who are to come after them; they represent those who are to know the Lord through their instrumentality; they represent the great multitude that will be gathered into Christ; they represent the Church. And therefore, this is called 'the fellowship of the apostles'. The 'fellowship of the apostles' is nothing other than the fellowship of the Father and the Son. It is the fellowship of life. It is not a fellowship of association, of outward gathering or coming together: it is a fellowship of life, and in life. It is a fellowship of the Spirit. That is what we find in Philippians: 'Is any fellowship in the Spirit?' (Phil. ii. 1). We cannot have fellowship just by meeting outwardly—there must be fellowship in the Spirit. And it is a fellowship of the Body: a fellowship without reservation, a fellowship without fear, without doubt; an open fellowship; a trust, a confidence, in one another, as members of the Body of Christ. This is the nature of the fellowship of the apostles. And we are called into that fellowship.

But are these apostles just naturally having 'good fellowship' among themselves? When we read the Scriptures, we find that our Lord Jesus called these twelve to Him, and they were to live with Him, to walk with Him, for three years. During those three years, we find that our Lord Jesus was trying all the time to draw them into Himself: to draw them into His confidence; to draw them into His mind; to draw them into His fellowship—His fellowship with the Father. But then we see how hard it was. The apostles did not understand Him. They were 'with' Him, out-

wardly; they stayed with Him; they worked with Him, day and night; and it continued for three years. And yet you find how our Lord was always frustrated. Every time He tried to open Himself to His disciples, He met a wall there; they did not understand what He meant. He tried to tell them the Father's will concerning Himself, but though they heard it, you find that, the very next moment, they did something that showed they did not understand. How hard it must have been on our Lord! How often He tried to open Himself to them; tried to draw them into that perfect, absolute fellowship that is without shadow, without reservation, without doubts, without fear. And yet, they were limited, they were restricted; they could never enter into that fellowship.

What about fellowship among the apostles themselves? There were twelve apostles; they were together with the Lord; and yet, when you read their lives together, what a 'life together'! The Lord acted as a mediator, as a peace-maker, all the time. True, they were grown-up people—they were not children; and they were not only grown-up people, but they really loved the Lord; they were willing to give up everything for the Lord, and they did; and they really had a hope, a blessed hope, before them. They followed the Lord, they walked with the Lord, they were willing to do everything for the Lord.

And yet, somehow, these twelve apostles could not live together as one! They fought against each other; they misunderstood each other; they were on guard all the time with one another. They tried to manoeuvre and out-manoeuve one another; there was suspicion among themselves; they were trying to see who could get the best. You know how, one day, the two sons of Zebedee out-manoeuved the ten. They came and asked the Lord that they might sit, one on His right, and one on His left. They did not consult the ten—they just did it themselves, and caught the other ten unaware, and you see the reaction of the ten apostles! They were not told; they were out-manoeuved; they were caught! and they reacted in anger—there was a strong reaction from the ten! It just showed that they were together outwardly, and with the Lord too, and yet not only had they no fellowship with the Lord Himself, or almost none, but they had absolutely no fellowship amongst themselves.

But one day, on the Day of Pentecost, something happened. You find that Peter stood up, and *with him* the eleven! (Acts ii. 14). They did not consult one another; they did not talk it over and say, 'Well, when I stand up, you stand up with

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me.' They did not do that. But, when Peter stood up, spontaneously and naturally, the other eleven stood with him. They were no longer individuals; something had happened—they became one! Although it was Peter who was the mouthpiece of God on that day, yet it was not Peter who was speaking. The twelve were there! Those people who were there on that day of Pentecost: they heard the voice of Peter, yes—but they *saw* the *Twelve*! The picture was changed. We find that it was the Twelve, as one, that stood before the world. It is a body, a corporate body; not individuals. And we find there is perfect fellowship among the apostles. They did not need to gather together for a consultation first, and then decide what to say. Whatever Peter said, the others said: 'That is just what I was going to say!' It was a fellowship in life, a fellowship of the Spirit. Gone was the suspicion; gone was the fear, the guarding against each other. Here you find perfect liberty—perfect confidence in one another; no reservation.

On that day the Lord showed us that there is such a thing as the 'fellowship of the apostles'. The fellowship of the Father and the Son had been limited to the Father and the Son from eternity; but on that day, something happened. It was broadened, it was widened, and man was gathered into that fellowship. And those early believers, immediately after they had believed on the Lord Jesus, 'continued in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles'. It is not only that, after they believed, they kept the teaching of the apostles—it is more than that. They entered into a fellowship; they found themselves joined naturally into a fellowship; they were living in a fellowship—something living, real and practical—the fellowship of the apostles.

Further, you will find it is written in the book of the Acts how they lived that life. They were *together*. That togetherness is not brought in by any outward method or means. It is due to the sameness of life. One life—'one Lord, one hope, one faith, one baptism, one Spirit, one God and Father of us all' (Eph. iv. 4-6). Therefore you find they are naturally together. And then you find that other word: 'everything in common'. That individualistic spirit is gone; that self-possessiveness is gone; there is a common-ness between them. They belong to One; and they meet 'with one accord'—*one* accord. Fear was upon the people, but there is no fear among themselves; there is only love among themselves. And their hearts and souls are knitted together into one. Not only their heart, but their *soul*: their affec-

tion, their mind, their desire, their will—everything is knitted together into one. That is the fellowship of the apostles.

It is not only vertical, toward the Father and the Son. I think we all know, if there is anything between us and that fellowship with the Father and the Son, that that is serious, very serious. If there is any shadow between us and God Himself, it is serious—we know that. But if there is any shadow between one and the other, between ourselves as brothers and sisters, is it not equally serious? because that perfect oneness is the fellowship of the apostles.

This is a world of great trials. People are always on strain. In some parts of the world, mental hospitals are always full, and there is a continual expansion of such hospitals, because people are living under such strain and fear, wondering what is going to happen. And one must be careful of the other: everyone is on guard. It is a life under great tension. And yet, brothers and sisters, I feel that many Christians to-day are also living a very tense life. Christians to-day are living under great strain with one another. You find there is such fear and doubt; there is a lack of rest and peace. Is it because we do not really understand what is the meaning of the fellowship of the apostles? Is it because we do not 'continue in the fellowship of the apostles'?

It is true that the fellowship of the apostles seems suddenly to come into being on the Day of Pentecost. It was not there before, but suddenly it is here. But I believe that, though it may have been precipitated on that day, it had been prepared for years. The Lord brought these twelve to Himself, and they were with Him for three years. Is it true that those three years were a failure? that nothing had been done? Outwardly it seems to be so. It seems as though, in these three years, nothing has been accomplished in the lives of these twelve. Not only that, but we find that because they were with the Lord their natural conditions were revealed all the more. If these twelve had not been with the Lord, we might not even know what they were; they might appear as people who were pious, who were looking forward to the hope of Israel, or who loved the Lord. They might appear to us as such. It was only when they were with the Lord that all that was in them was revealed.

We find that, wherever the Lord went, there were diseases and demon possessions. Is it because there were not any there before, or that there were more of such things in certain places than in others? No! It is all because the Lord is there.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

When the Lord is present, everything is brought to light. He is the Light.

I believe that, in these three years, all that was hidden in the hearts of these disciples was brought into full light. That is why we find that they were such people. Actually they were no worse than we are; but, because they were with the Lord, everything inside was being brought out. The Lord had really done something in their lives. Everything that was naturally there was revealed, and, on the day when our Lord was betrayed, they were scattered. In other words, they were brought to their end—they were *brought* to their end. On that day, they began to realise that whatever they might think they had was gone! They were scattered. But, after our Lord was raised up from the dead, He re-gathered them—not on the old

basis, but on the basis of resurrection life. The Lord re-gathered them, and filled them with the Holy Spirit, and so they were baptized into one. And *then* we find the fellowship of the apostles!

So, brothers and sisters, we are called into that fellowship. It is the will of God that we should continue in that fellowship. How can we do so? Only by daily taking the ground of death to ourselves—to everything that is old. We recognise that all that is in *us* is dead: we are brought to the end of ourselves. And then, every day, we take the ground of resurrection life. We open ourselves to the Lord, and let Him fill us with His Spirit; and it is only then that we find we are truly having fellowship with the Father and the Son, and we have fellowship with one another. (S. K. of China)

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JANUARY — FEBRUARY, 1959

BROKENNESS

"By reason of breakings they purify themselves." (Job xl. 25.)

God uses most for His glory those people and things which are most perfectly broken. The sacrifices He accepts are broken and contrite hearts. It was the breaking down of Jacob's natural strength at Peniel that got him where God could clothe him with spiritual power. It was the breaking the surface of the rock at Horeb, by the stroke of Moses' rod, that let out the cool waters to thirsty people.

It was when the 300 elect soldiers under Gideon broke their pitchers, a type of breaking themselves, that the hidden lights shone forth to the consternation of their adversaries. It was when the poor widow broke the seal of the little pot of oil, and poured it forth, that God multiplied it to pay her debts and supply means of support.

It was when Esther risked her life and broke through the rigid etiquette of a heathen court, that she obtained favour to rescue her people from death. It was when Jesus took the five loaves and broke them, that the bread was multiplied in the very act of breaking, sufficient to feed five thousand. It was when Mary broke her beautiful alabaster box, rendering it henceforth useless, that the pent-up perfume filled the house. It was when Jesus allowed His precious body to be broken to pieces by thorns and nails and spear, that His inner life was poured out, like a crystal ocean, for thirsty sinners to drink and live.

It is when a beautiful grain of corn is broken up in the earth by DEATH, that its inner heart sprouts forth and bears hundreds of other grains. And thus, on and on, through all history, and all biography, and all vegetation, and all spiritual life, God must have BROKEN THINGS.

Those who are broken in wealth, and broken in self-will, and broken in their ambitions, and broken in their beautiful ideals, and broken in worldly reputation, and broken in their affections, and broken ofttimes in health; those who are despised and seem utterly forlorn and helpless, the Holy Ghost is seizing upon, and using for God's glory. "The lame take the prey," Isaiah tells us.

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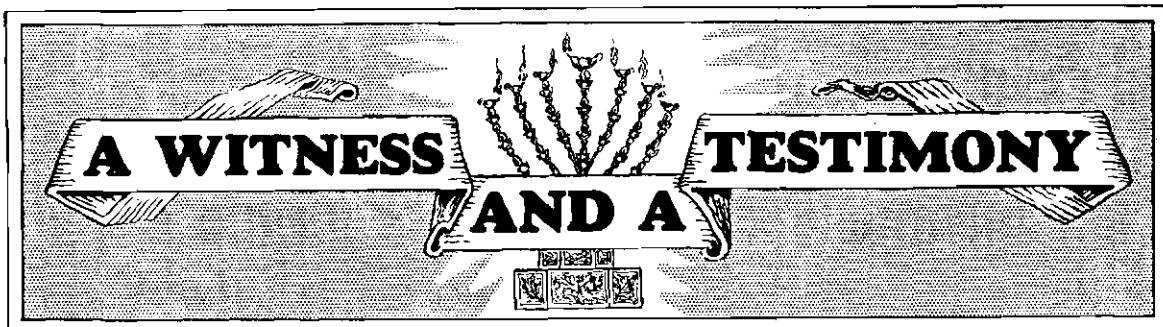
THIS MINISTRY

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 (literally—*full knowledge*) of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we be no longer children..."

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EDITORIAL

“ACCORDING TO CHRIST”

(continued)

THE occasion of these editorials is a widespread and serious exercise concerning the nature of the local expression of the Church. As we pursue this enquiry we are getting ever nearer to the heart of the matter. The fragment at the head is, we trust, becoming clearer as to its real significance for every local representation, from the “two or three” gathered into the Name, to whatever greater number there may be. Let us, then, bring it right back to this: it is not an expression or representation of some *thing*, even be it called ‘The Church’, as extra to or apart from Christ, but the presence and expression of Christ Himself. To this essential reality we now apply ourselves along one more of the lines which meet in Him.

PETER AS REPRESENTATIVE

We shall all agree that, while the full revelation of the Church has come through Paul, Peter was the point at which both the intimation was given (Matt. xvi. 18) and the actuality broke in (Acts ii). While much—too much—has been made of this by historic ecclesiasticism, we do agree that Peter was in an outstandingly significant place in the beginning of the Church in this world. So we are going to look at Peter with a view to getting to

the most fundamental factor of all in the Church and the churches.

When Peter sat down to write his circular letter to “the elect, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia”, he began with a doxology. That doxology hinged upon the living hope springing up with the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Peter, perhaps more than all men, had cause for a doxology over the resurrection of Jesus!

But we take Peter as representative of all those who had become followers of the Lord Jesus in the days of His flesh; not only of the twelve, but evidently quite a large number beyond the twelve. There were the seventy; and, beyond the seventy, many more who followed Jesus, and had some attachment to Him. Peter can be taken as, in a very real sense, representative of them all.

THE DEVASTATION OF THE CROSS

We are thinking at this moment particularly of the *effect* of the Cross upon him, and upon them all. The utter devastation, and then the despair, that the Cross of the Lord Jesus brought upon them. For we are told they were ‘all scattered

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abroad'; and we know how, even before the Cross became an actuality, any reference to it brought a terrible reaction. From time to time the Lord did just make some mention of His coming death, and, as He did so, many went away, followed no more with Him (John vi. 66). Then again, others said, "This is a hard saying; who can hear it?" (v. 60). Apparently off they went as well. The very thought and prospect of the Cross was impossible of acceptance. When it came, Peter, as the very centre of that whole company, is found most vehemently denying, with a terrible denial, any association with Christ—just because of the Cross; and they all shared that, even if not in word and in the same form of expression, for we are told that 'they all forsook him and fled' (Matt. xxvi. 56). And He had said to them: 'You will all leave Me' (John xvi. 32)—and it became true.

Then we meet them after His crucifixion. We meet those two on the Emmaus road, the very embodiment of despair. For them, everything had gone, was shattered. All their hopes, and their hope, were eclipsed—'We had trusted . . .', or 'We had hoped that it had been He that should redeem Israel' (Luke xxiv. 21). Now, everything was gone, and the hope laid in His grave.

From time to time we meet Thomas, and we know what Thomas thought about the Cross. He again was in the grip of an awful despair and hopelessness—loss of faith, loss of assurance. As we move through those forty days after the resurrection, we find the Lord repeatedly having to upbraid them, rebuke them, because of their unbelief. 'They believed not', it says (Mark xvi. 11, 13, 14). 'Some doubted' (Matt. xxviii. 17). We can see what a shock the Cross had been. I have not used too strong a word when I have said that the Cross was nothing less than a devastation for every follower of the Lord Jesus. And right at the heart of them all was Peter; we could say that it was all concentrated in him. It must have been, in view of what he had done. Put yourself in his place, if you can, and see if you would have any more hope for anything, or for yourself. No!

THE ONE SUPREME ESSENTIAL

Now, there were forty days of this: forty days of appearances, disappearances, of coming and going; a build-up, steadily, of the fact that He was risen; overcoming day by day that despair and that unbelief; building up a new hope. But even after forty days of all that, the most vital thing is still lacking. You might think, 'Well, given all that, they have enough to go on.' But no: the most vital thing, even at that point, is still lacking. What

is it? It is *Christ within!* All that—yes! but not *Christ within*—yet. Hence the restraint: 'Tarry ye in Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high' (Luke xxiv. 49). 'Don't move yet. With all that you have, you really have not yet got the vital thing, the essential thing.' And that thing is *Christ in you, the hope of glory. Christ in you!*

That is why the apostles were so particular as to converts receiving the Holy Spirit before ever they felt assurance about their conversion. Thus, there were all the reports—there was no reason to believe they were false reports, mere rumours—about things happening in Samaria. Had not the Lord said that they would be witnesses unto Him in Samaria (Acts i. 8)? The report comes back of things happening, of people turning to the Lord, real conversions taking place in large numbers. Why not be satisfied with the report? It is a good report, and there is surely no reason to doubt it. But no; the apostles are not just satisfied with that. They sent down from Jerusalem, and when they were come down, they laid their hands upon them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit (Acts viii. 14–17). We see, again and again, how that happens. For them, things were not really settled until they were sure that Christ was on the *inside*—that Christ was *in* them; which is saying the same thing as 'receiving the Holy Spirit', the Spirit of Jesus. That, I say, is why the Lord said, 'Tarry; don't move yet!' And that is why the apostles were so meticulous on this matter of 'receiving the Holy Spirit'.

That, too, is why the Holy Spirit gave evidences, in those times, that He had come within. We believe that this book, the Book of the Acts, is a book of fundamental principles for the dispensation. When principles are being laid down in the first instance, God always bears them out with mighty evidences that they are true principles—that these are governing things for all time. God puts His seal upon them. So, when they received the Spirit, there were the evidences of the Spirit. They spoke with tongues; mighty things happened. It was clear to all, without any doubt whatever, that the Spirit was on the inside; Christ had entered in. That universal Christ, transcending all human language; that Christ of Heaven, transcending all earthly things—He had come in, and the evidences were given.

There is no mistaking this, that the matter of *Christ within* is the fundamental essential of Christianity. You may have the mightiest facts—the mightiest facts of His birth, of His marvellous life, His death, His resurrection—and they are the mightiest of facts—you may have them all, and

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they may all be im-potent, non-potent, until He is inside! That is a tremendous statement, but it is borne out by at least this threefold truth: Tarry—don't move yet; the essential has not taken place after all! Make sure; leave nothing to chance; let it not be just an emotional revival in Samaria! Whatever there may seem to be on the outside, to prove that something has happened, make sure that it has got inside! Make sure that Christ is *in*—the Holy Spirit is *in*! Make sure! For, as we shall see as we go on, you may have so much—and then, that vital thing being lacking, there may be calamity, as with them.

This mighty hope does not rest merely upon historic grounds—that is, upon the ground of the historic Jesus. This mighty hope rests upon inward reality—Christ in you! That is super-historic! And for the full, full meaning—the 'mystery which hath been hid from all generations'—it has been there through *all* generations—but is now made known, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory'—we have to go to Paul.

THE INSUFFICIENT FOUNDATION

So much for a general approach to the matter. Let us now in greater detail consider Peter, and the others whom he undoubtedly represents.

Firstly, then, as to the *hopelessness*, ultimately, of a *merely outward association with Christ*, however sincere. There is no question about the sincerity of Peter or of any of those followers. They were sincere; there was a devotion to Jesus; their motives could not be called into question; it was well meant—there is no doubt about it. They had left all and followed Him; and to follow Jesus of Nazareth in those days involved them in a considerable amount of trouble, at least with the high-up people, and the prevailing system. Their association with Him undoubtedly meant something.

Moreover, while perhaps they were not able fully to see and understand; while they were not in the full light of who He was—the *fact* of who He was present with them.

For instance, there is the fact of the *incarnation*—the *fact* of it: that this One amongst them was God incarnate, was the very Son of God, was God come down from Heaven to dwell in human form. There is the fact. They were in closest touch with that fact every day of their lives.

Then, there was the fact of His *personality*: and there is no avoiding this, that that was a personality! I mean, there was a Presence where He was, that was different; that made itself felt, that registered. His was a very, very impressive Presence, beyond that of anyone else with whom they

had any association, or of whom they had any other knowledge. There is a mystery about this Man: you cannot fathom Him; you cannot explain Him; you cannot comprehend Him: He is more; He is different. And wherever He comes, His Presence has an effect, and a tremendous effect. The *fact* of His personality!

And then, although we do not know how far it went, there was the fact of *Mary* and her secret. We do not know to how many she spoke of her secret; we are told that she 'hid all these things in her heart' (Luke ii. 19, 51). But we do know that some knew about it. We know that she told Elisabeth all about it; and Zachariah knew it; and John the Baptist knew Mary's secret. She was there with them all. There is the *fact* of Mary and her secret—without pressing that too much; but it is there.

Then there is the fact of the *miracles*—we cannot very well get away from them. Miracles in the realm of the elements—the sea and the wind; miracles in the realm of nature—as our hymn says: 'It was spring-time when He took the loaves, and harvest when He brake'. Miracles in the realm of sickness and disease, and even death: His healing, and His raising from the dead, such as the son of the widow of Nain. These were *facts*. And then, in the realm of the powers of evil—muzzling demons and casting them out, and delivering the demon-possessed. These were all *facts* present with them. It is a tremendous accumulation of evidence.

Further, the fact of the *teaching*: that, without special education, He bewildered, confounded and defeated the authorities of His time—all the men of information and knowledge, the scribes, the lawyers, the best representatives of the intellect of Jewry. They picked out on occasions their best intellects, to go and try and catch Him in His words; and these very men had to ask the question: 'Whence hath this Man this, having never learned?' (John vii. 15). There was the *fact* of His teaching.

There is a tremendous build-up. What a situation! They had all that (and how much more that embraces!)—and yet, whilst being in possession of that whole mass of mighty facts and realities about Him, and whilst living in the closest association with Him, it was possible for them to know all the havoc and the despair of the Cross. I venture to say that you and I would probably think that, if we had only a bit of that, we should be safe for ever; never have any reason whatever to doubt our salvation. And they had it all, and yet here we have them after the Cross in abject despair. I have not exaggerated; I do not think one could

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exaggerate in this matter. When it came to the supreme test, all that did not save them ; there was lacking the one essential to make it all vital, to make it the very triumph in the trying hour. That one essential is Christ—*that* Christ—in you. So long as all that is still objective, on the outside, though you may be in the closest association with it all, there is yet something lacking. And that lack may spell disaster, for it did with them.

By the resurrection a new hope was born ; by the resurrection a new power came into the world and human life ; by the resurrection the way was opened for that Christ to change His position from Heaven—from outside—into the inner life of the believer. It has all got to be ‘Christ *in* you, the hope of glory’. This is just the essential nature of this dispensation in which we live. In the former dispensation, the Spirit moved from the outside *upon*. Jesus said : ‘When He is come, He shall be *in* you.’ That is the change of dispensations ; that is the character of this present dispensation—the Spirit within. What is the secret of the Church’s power? What is the secret of the believer’s life, strength, persistence, endurance, triumph against all hell and the world? What is the secret of ultimate glory? It is Christ *in* you ; in other words, that you have really and definitely *received* the Holy Spirit.

How important this is!—that you and I shall *know* that our Christianity, our faith, does not rest upon even the greatest historic facts, but that we *know* that Christ is inside ; we *know* that we have received the Holy Spirit. That is the secret of everything.

Let us carry this a little further, and consider the next thing : *the hopelessness of work for Christ without Christ within*.

‘He called unto Him whom He Himself would ; and He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him’ (Mark iii. 13, 14) ; and He chose seventy, and sent them forth, and gave them power over unclean spirits, over all manner of diseases ; and they went forth, and they returned with great joy saying, ‘Even the demons are subject unto us in Thy Name’ (Luke x. 1, 17). Tremendous ! ‘Heal the sick’—yes ; ‘raise the dead ; cast out demons ; freely ye have received, freely give’ (Matt. x. 8). And they returned with great joy : it was done ; they had seen it ! And you have this picture after the Cross of these same people—the *same people*—devastated ! You say : Is that possible? is that real? If you know your own heart, you will know it is possible. But what is the meaning of this?

In the case of the ‘twelve’ and the ‘seventy’, we have set forth a strange, wonderful, and almost

frightening fact. It is that, within the vast scope of the sovereign rule of God—which is only another definition of the ‘Kingdom of God’—within the sovereign rule of God, many things obtain which only *express* that sovereignty. They are not of the essential and permanent essence of God Himself, as in the nature of things ; they are the *works* of God. I say, within that vast scope of His rule and His reign, God has countless instruments of His sovereignty—be it official, be it providential—which He just uses in His sovereignty in relation to His end. There is a purpose to be served, an end to be reached, concerning His Son, Jesus Christ : it has got to be made known in this world that the Kingdom of God has drawn near, and that Jesus Christ is the centre of that Kingdom. And, in order to make that known, God will employ sovereignly even the Devil himself ! His sovereignty gathers into it many, many things which are not essentially of the nature of God.

Perhaps you have been amazed sometimes, and perplexed and bewildered, why God should use that, and that and that ; and such and such persons. You have been inclined to say : ‘It is all contrary to what I believe to be necessary to God for His work. I see that the Bible says that instruments have got to be according to God’s mind in order to be used.’ But history does not bear that out. As I say, He has used the Devil, and the Devil is not according to God’s mind. There is a sovereignty of God spread over in relation to His end.

But when you have said that, it is a frightening fact when you come to the work of God. I mean this—that we may be working for God, and doing many mighty things as employees of the Kingdom of God, the rule of God, and then, in the end, be cast away ! In the end, we ourselves might just go to pieces. Here it is—this strange thing, that these men went out, twelve and seventy, with this ‘delegated authority’—this *delegated* authority—and exercised it, and mighty things resulted ; and then these same people are found, after the Cross, with their faith shattered ; nothing to rest upon. What does it say?

THE DEFICIENCY MADE GOOD

Thank God, the book of the Acts transforms the whole situation ! Because the book of the Acts brings in this mighty new factor : that Christ, who had delegated the authority, is now indwelling as the authority Himself. And the works now are mighty works, but they are not just works *for* the Lord—they are the works *of* the Lord. It all goes to prove this tremendous fact : that it is “Christ *in* you” that is the indispensable necessity for life and

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for work. All that they had in their association with Him, and then all that they were allowed to do by His delegated authority—all fell short of being something that could make them triumphant in the hour of the deepest testing. And that is something!

Paul put his finger on it at Ephesus, if you remember, when he said: 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' (Acts xix. 2). It was ever the apostles' question, and ever their quest. They knew afterward, if they knew anything at all, that nothing, *nothing*, will stand up to anything, save Christ Himself indwelling.

Now, we can, of course, take that both ways. There is the negative side—the almost frightening possibility that there should be all that, and then disaster at the end. But let us take it positively. What a marvellous thing it is that we are in the dispensation when the one thing, above all others, that God will make true, is "Christ in you"—Christ *in* you! No wonder Peter burst forth with his doxology: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who . . . hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead"! You need to be Peter to be able to speak as he spoke; to have gone through the awful shattering, into that unspeakable depth of despair, loss of hope, to be able to say "a living hope"—a *living* hope! And what is it? "Christ *in* you, the hope of glory."

No; there is no hope for us individually; there is no hope for our companies, our churches, our

assemblies; there is no hope for Christianity—unless and until the living Christ, with all the tremendous significance of His coming into this world, of His life here, of His Cross, of His resurrection, has come, by the Holy Spirit, on to the inside of things, of people, and churches; until it is "Christ *in* you". All the other may be there—the creed, the teaching; you may, with all sincerity and honesty, say: 'I believe in God the Father . . .' and so on—it may all be there, and yet there may be disaster where that thing is the most frequently declared.

It is the impact of Christ that matters. In those early days He could not be present without it being known; and that is the thing that you and I need; that is the secret of the Church's power. It is the presence of Christ on the 'inside' of you and of me, and of all of us as people together; "this mystery *among the nations*, which is Christ in you". You are among the nations; and the deepest, the profoundest, the most inexplicable thing is "Christ in you", as you are amongst the nations, "the hope of glory."

It is a question of *hope*. It can be touched by a deep and terrible despair; it can see disintegration and disruption. What we need is a mighty, mighty hope, a living hope—that is, Christ, Christ risen, Christ Himself! We need to get beyond even the resurrection, to where we are able to say: It is Christ present; to what Christ means, as *within* us.

EDITOR

THE ARM OF THE LORD

VII. RECOVERY OF LOST TESTIMONY

ABUNDANT GRACE, AND GOD'S SURE WORD

AS we move into the next and succeeding chapters of Isaiah—being now, as I have said, on the positive, the resurrection side, the constructive side of the Cross—we find that one thing comes very much into view: namely, the recovery of God's testimony in the City and in the nations. That is the key to this section of Isaiah from chapter liv onward. You will notice that Zion is much in view here. If you run through and circle the words 'Zion' and 'Jerusalem', you will see that that is the centre, the focal point of the testimony; but again, the nations are very much in view also. This will come out more fully as we proceed.

We come, then, first, to chapter lv, and we notice two things that mark this chapter.

In verses 1-9, we see the freeness and the abundance of grace released to the people of God on this resurrection ground—free and abundant grace. "*Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price . . .*" How much of the New Testament could be crowded into that!

Then, from verse 10 to verse 13, we have God's sure word: "*My word . . . shall not return unto me void*". Nowadays, we usually claim that promise from the Lord when we are going to give a message, that His word shall not return to Him void.

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Of course, the principle is of general application ; we are not wrong at any time in taking hold of that, provided that it really is the word of the Lord that we have to deliver. But I want to point out that that is not the particular meaning of the statement here. You will notice the sequence in verses 11 and 12: "*So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth : it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. FOR . . .*" (you must not stop there)—"*FOR ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills . . .*", and so on. The immediate meaning of the promise of the sure and effectual word is: This people had been promised by God deliverance ; they had been assured that the Lord was going to bring them back from captivity. (Compare Is. xxxv. 10 ; xlviii. 20 ; lii. 12). He had given His word that they should go out with joy and in peace, in these conditions. That was the word, and that word was not going to fail.

THE HOUSE OF PRAYER, AND THE NEED FOR MEEKNESS

When you come to chapter lvi, you find that everything centres in the House of Prayer for all peoples. "*Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer ; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon my altar : for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all peoples*" (verse 7). This is still related to the recovery of the Lord's testimony, and it is to be found in His House—"My house of prayer".

In chapter lvii, we find some further warnings to the Lord's people against any recurrence of that which had destroyed the testimony before. It seems always necessary for the Lord to say, and to say again: Be careful of the coming back of those old things which wrecked your testimony in the past ; the things which (to use Jeremiah's phrase from the potter's house) 'marred' the vessel of testimony. (See Jer. xviii. 4.) So He gives here admonition concerning such ever-present perils. Then, in verse 15, the ground of the Lord's presence and committal is mentioned. "*For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy : I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.*" These are the conditions of the Lord's presence, those in which His testimony will be reconstituted.

Chapters lviii and lix are full of more warnings, more admonitions, more instructions, by way of

clearing the skies of the clouds that would obscure the testimony. Notice chapter lviii, verse 8: "*Then shall thy light break forth as the morning . . .*" It is the shining out of this testimony that is governing everything with the Lord. These warnings and admonitions are given in order to bring about the removal of the clouds that are lingering about the sky and trying to obscure the clear shining.

A CLEAR SHINING TESTIMONY RECOVERED

We are thus led into chapter lx. All that has gone before has prepared the way, always with this in view: "*Arise, shine ; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.*" Here, then, we come to this matter of the recovered testimony ; the shining light of the Church in the midst of dark conditions, in a very dark world. "*For . . . darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples : but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.*" That is the thing that is uppermost in this last section of Isaiah's prophecies. When the testimony is restored (verse 1), the nations are affected by it: "*Lift up thine eyes round about, and see : they all gather themselves together, they come to thee : thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be carried in the arms. Then thou shalt see and be lightened, and thine heart shall tremble and be enlarged ; because the abundance of the sea shall be turned unto thee, the wealth of the nations shall come unto thee*" (verses 4, 5).

When the testimony is clear, when the shining is undimmed ; when God has in His House, in His people, conditions answering to all that the Cross means, then you have this effect all around: the nations are affected, the peoples are touched ; something happens, and a wealth, an enrichment, a fulness comes back to the Church itself. If the Lord has things according to His mind: in other words, if He really has His testimony in fulness, undimmed, without cloud, without shadow, in the midst of His people, in the vessel of His House : then the nations feel the effect, the impact, of it, and the Church itself is greatly enriched. "*Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, for the name of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee*" (verse 9).

THE NEW TESTAMENT COUNTERPART

Now this, we know, is Old Testament prophecy. We recognise that the prophet was saying more

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than he knew—that his utterances contained and combined two interwoven elements. On the one side, as far as Israel was concerned, there was history in the making; but on the other side, all the way through this, there was (as in chapter liii) a pointing on to the Messiah—to the Lord Himself; to the Cross, and to all that was to follow the Cross in resurrection. There was the temporal and the passing, but there was also the spiritual and the eternal, which the Holy Spirit always saw and had in view in history.

Thus, in every connection, as we have seen, we are so to speak 'handed on', by these prophecies, to the New Testament. And the New Testament counterpart of what we have been seeing in Isaiah about the recovered testimony is found particularly in one of Paul's letters, namely, in his Second Letter to the Corinthians.

PAUL'S SECOND LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS

The great issue of both the letters to the Corinthians was that of the testimony of the Church in the city of Corinth and in the world. When we read these letters, of course we become very much taken up with all the details: in the First Letter, with the miserable details; the many things that are being dealt with. It is, for the greater part, not a happy or pleasant letter to read: perhaps you have given it up many times before you have got to the end, not understanding very much, and not liking a good deal more. But we need to stand back from it, and ask: What is it all about, after all? Let us not upset ourselves about all the details, for the moment; they all go to make up some one particular issue. What is the issue?

Well, as I have said, the issue of the letters to the Corinthians is the Lord's testimony in the Church, in the city and in the nations. Let us be clear about that. In the First Letter, there is, as you know, very much said about the world, and how the church in Corinth was failing to overpower the world, because the world had already overpowered it from the inside. The testimony was destroyed from within, and therefore there was no real impact upon the world. The natural, the carnal man had found his way into the church, and the church had therefore lost its testimony. It will always be like that. If anything of the natural man and the carnal man makes inroads, in any locality, into the church, that will be the end of the testimony in that church, and in that locality, and, so far as that company is concerned, in relation to the world. When the natural man comes in the testimony goes out.

TESTIMONY DESTROYED BY CARNAL ELEMENTS

In the First Letter, then, the whole question was one not merely of local conditions, but of the local conditions destroying the testimony of the Church in the city. And therefore all those conditions had to be dealt with, had to be exposed, uncovered, and brought to the Cross of Christ. Of course, what we have in I Corinthians is Satan's second great strategy toward paralysing the Church's testimony. His first strategy, his first line with the Church, was open persecution, to try to destroy, to obliterate the Church's testimony in the city of Jerusalem and in the nation. As we know, it failed! But now Satan comes back along a second line of strategy: that is, he insinuates, into the very ranks of the church, men according to his own mind—carnal elements—the natural man, the carnal man. They serve the Devil's purpose so well; they effect the very thing he is after. When he finds he cannot succeed by open persecution, he comes round, as it were, to the back entrance, and introduces carnal and natural elements in by that door—and that has done it! The testimony goes out; it is destroyed.

But in between these two letters to the Corinthians, something happened. In chapter vii of the Second Letter we read: "*Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye were made sorry unto repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly sort, that ye might suffer loss by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, a repentance which bringeth no regret*" (vii. 9, 10). The Apostle has a good deal to say about what had evidently taken place after his first letter. There was repentance; there was judging of themselves and of the conditions; there was, as he said, 'a clearing of themselves' (v. 11). There was a real distress and exercise about their condition, and this had taken place between the two letters. We may say that they had brought the situation to the Cross, and that had changed everything. And now that things had been dealt with on the inside, the whole matter of the testimony to the world, in the city, could be reconsidered, and a counter-attack could be made by the church upon the enemy.

So that is what is in this Second Letter—the recovery of the testimony in the locality and out to the world. It all brings out into very clear relief the constituents of effective testimony—or, to use Isaiah's figure, the shining forth of the light. Let us look at some of the things that Paul says about this.

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THE VALUE OF TRIUMPHANT LOVE

"For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be made sorry, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you" (II Cor. ii. 4).

The first thing that we see is the value of triumphant love. That is a constituent of effective testimony, of clear shining. This clearly had its two sides in the Apostle. If ever a man might have found his love exhausted, the Apostle might well have been that man, as far as these Corinthians were concerned; for he did say: "If I love you more abundantly, am I loved the less?" (xii. 15). Surely that is enough to put any man off—to find that all his outpouring and outgoing and giving in love only means that love is being withdrawn; that less and less love comes back. What a situation he had to meet! yet his love triumphed. But it seems to have had an effect in them too: something of what he had written in his First Letter, chapter xiii, seems to have come about. Yes, the triumph of I Corinthians xiii can be traced in this Second Letter to some very real degree—the love that "suffereth long, and is kind", and so on—the quality of triumphant love.

That, we might very well say, is the first and primary factor in effective testimony. The Lord Jesus said that: "By this shall all men know . . . if ye have love one to another" (John xiii. 35). This is the testimony; this is how it will be known—if we have love one for another. It matters very much whether the world is affected by what it sees. We cannot close the doors on ourselves, and say: 'Oh, well, the world in any case is inimical, it is always hostile, it is always unsympathetic; why take any account of it? Let us shut ourselves in and get on with our job.' You cannot do that; you cannot ignore the world. We are here to affect the world—that is one of the chief reasons why the Lord leaves us here. We are not just to live here, cloistered and closed in, indifferent to the world, coldly detached from it.

Moreover, the world is going to find out, sooner or later, what is happening inside the church—what is happening in your local assembly! Make no mistake about it. The world will know the condition of the church: you cannot close doors and windows on that, and keep it in! All around will know; it will become known. And I repeat—it is a most important thing that the world should be affected, not by what it hears us say, but by what it sees in us. And the only thing it can really see, that will affect it, will be the mutual love which we

have one for another. "By *this* shall all men know . . . if ye have *love* one to another." One of the most effective ways of testimony is—not preaching, but—*loving*! If that is there it will do far more than our preaching. But it will at least give a great backing to our preaching. All our preaching must be supported by this one thing—a strong triumphant love in the midst of the Lord's people.

THE VALUE OF SUFFERING WITH CHRIST

The second thing in testimony is the value of suffering with Christ. There is much about this in the Second Letter to the Corinthians. For instance: "*The Father of mercies and God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our affliction, that we may be able to comfort them that are in any affliction, through the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound unto us, even so our comfort also aboundeth through Christ" (II Cor. i. 3-5).*

First of all, suffering with Christ brings a wonderful return in our discovery of the consolations of Christ.

It is a very important thing, in a world like this, that we should have some comfort to give. Both in the Church and outside of the Church, there is a great need of a ministry of comfort. You come back to Isaiah: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God" (Is. xl. 1). But you cannot fulfil a ministry of comfort in mere platitudes; by coming into difficult and troubled situations and just saying nice things. If people are in real trouble, in real distress, and you begin to talk to them, the first thing they have a right to say to you is: 'Well, what do you know about it? Have you ever been in my position, my condition? have you ever had any deep, deep suffering? What do you know about it?'

Perhaps, therefore, it is one of those sovereign, providential ways of God, that He allows His people to know much suffering, so that they may derive this wonderful value of the consolations of Christ, in order that they may have that with which to comfort or encourage others—the tried, the suffering, the sorrowing. And what have we to give? Well, the word is: "that we may be able to comfort . . . through the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." And if there is anyone reading these lines, who is having a painful, suffering time, going through a 'dark patch', as we say, might I try to transfigure it for you, in this way. Just look at it like this. Say to yourself: 'This gives me an opportunity to make a discovery of the Lord which will be stock-in-trade for future service. In my distress and trouble I can find com-

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fort and help from the Lord, which may be of tremendous value to some others in the future.'

MINISTRY MADE THROUGH EXPERIENCE OF RESURRECTION

For that is how ministry is made. The man or the woman who is ambitious to be 'in the ministry'—to be speaking and preaching, going about taking meetings and all that sort of thing—but who has not gone through deep places, and found the Lord there, and brought up some treasure from the depths, some 'pearl of great price': that one's ministry is not real; it is artificial, it is merely professional. The true minister of Jesus Christ will be taken down to the depths, to discover there, right down there, and to bring up thence, these pearls, these precious things, for the sake of the Church. Did you notice that phrase in Isaiah—"the abundance of the sea shall be turned unto thee" (Is. lx. 5)? Yes, but the sea can be a very deep place, a very dark place, a very terrible place: and yet there are treasures there. That is the way of testimony.

Notice what Paul writes at the beginning of his letter. "*For we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning our affliction which befell us in Asia, that we were weighed down exceedingly, beyond our power, insomuch that we despaired even of life: yea, we ourselves have had the answer of death within ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead*" (II Cor. i. 8). This is how ministry is made—when you have a real experience of and testimony to the power of His resurrection. When everything seemed hopeless in your own personal situation; when everything seemed hopeless in your company of believers; and the providence of God led you to make a discovery of the power of His resurrection, 'that you should not trust in yourself but in God who raises the dead': this is a constituting of ministry. If you have gone that way, you are a true 'minister'; you need not take the name; you need not be set apart or anything. If you have a knowledge of the mighty power of His resurrection, you *are* a minister; you have something which is most greatly needed.

THE VALUE OF BROKENNESS

The third thing in effective testimony is the value of brokenness and weakness.

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves; we are pressed on every side, yet not straitened; perplexed, yet

not unto despair; pursued, yet not forsaken; smitten down, yet not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the putting to death of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you" (II Cor. iv. 7-12).

We should continue reading down to verse 18. You will notice that this section has as its real message the tremendous value of the quality of brokenness and weakness. That is a vital thing in effective testimony. We, perhaps, do not naturally put much value on brokenness and weakness; but here, very much value is put upon it. "We have this treasure in vessels of fragile clay." What the Apostle is saying, in effect, is this: 'We are broken men; we are weak vessels. The one thing about us, more than anything else, is our capacity for being broken—it seems that we have just been made to be broken.' And then he is saying that there is an infinite value attached to that.

In the First Letter to the Corinthians, the church was not broken. It was hard; it was trying to hold itself intact; it was proud; it was judging; it was cruel; it was unkind; it was anything but broken. But now, as we read this Second Letter, we find there is about the church a softness. It is soft—it is melted—it is broken! You can talk about 'ministry' now; you can talk about 'testimony' now; you could not do so before. No: until the vessel is broken, nothing can flow out; if anything is to flow out, it will only do so when the vessel is broken. The Apostle is saying that that was how it was with him personally (and of course he is, by inference, passing it on to the church in Corinth). Our weakness, our brokenness, is of the greatest importance and value, for it is only then that the real treasure can be manifested.

Do you talk about 'the testimony'? have you got a phraseology of 'testimony'? Do you talk about 'ministry'? have you got ideas about 'ministry'? My dear friend, the Holy Spirit would say, both to you and to me, that testimony and ministry are only real when they come from broken men and women. Let us make no mistake about it. I know it is the hard way, but it is the only way. You and I have no right to minister, no right to talk about 'the testimony' or about 'the Church' or about 'the vessel' or any such things, unless we know something of this brokenness, this weakness.

You see how true this is to what we read in Isaiah. The Lord says: "Mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all peoples" (Is. lvi. 7); *but*—"Thus saith the high and lofty One

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that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit" (Is. lvii. 15). You find Him at humbled Corinth, chastened Corinth. There is something new in this second letter—something that was missing from the first. You feel the unction of the Spirit, the beauty of the Lord. Yes: the Lord is here now, because they are broken. That unction of the Lord is only found with men and women who have really had a weakening, a breaking, an emptying, who have lost all "confidence in the flesh", whose own self-strength has all gone. That is the way of the shining; that is the way of recovered testimony.

LOVE THE WAY OF ENLARGEMENT

There is one more passage to which I would like to refer you.

"Our mouth is open unto you, O Corinthians, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own affections. Now for a recompense in like kind (I speak as unto my children), be ye also enlarged" (II Cor. vi. 11 - 13).

What was the cause of the lost, broken-down testimony in Corinth? They were too small; they were too little. Paul said that he had to treat them like babes—they were peevish! Children can be like that, can they not? Trifles have far too much importance. Paul says: 'Be enlarged, be enlarged! Let your hearts be enlarged! Be *bigger* people—be too big to come down to all these mean things. Have big thoughts, have big feelings—of course without self-importance or self-inflation; have a large heart—a heart of *love*!'

What does love do? Love "rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth". Love "believeth all things": it takes a large heart to do that, does it not? It is never ready to believe an unfavourable report, but always ready to believe that there may be something that can be set off against it—that there may be another explanation. Love rejoices not when one who has committed a wrong suffers for it—that is paltry. This is where David is such a rebuke to us. Just consider him: what a life Saul gave him during those years! He hunted him, he said, like a flea, like a partridge (I Sam. xxiv. 14, xxvi. 20); chased and pursued him from rock to rock, from cave to cave, in the wilderness, if only he might get him and destroy him; gave him no peace day or night. He was determined, implacably determined, that David should die. And the day came when, in one of these pursuits, Saul, with his 3,000 chosen men—an army to catch a man!—arrived in a certain

place at night, and lay down to sleep. And, unknown to him, David was very near, right on the spot (I don't think he would have slept if he had known!); and David came with his men, and looked on him; and David's men said: 'Now is your chance—the Lord has given him into your hands!' (I Sam. xxiv. 4).

You know, if only we can imagine we have got Divine support for something, that is all we want. We only want someone to say, 'It is the Lord's will', and, if it is something that serves our own interests, something that we would naturally very much like, how we will go for it! It is a very strong temptation, is it not, when it appears to be supported by the Lord?

But here, David—as on another such occasion, when his companion said: 'God has delivered your enemy into your hands this day; now is your chance! Let me smite him, and I won't have to smite him twice! One blow, and I will finish the whole thing for you!' (I Sam. xxvi. 8)—David replied: 'No, no; God forbid that I should touch the Lord's anointed!' Ah, that is bigness; that is real greatness. He forebore, to his own hurt. He knew not how many more years of suffering he he would have, but he accepted them. He could have ended all that at one blow, but he said: 'No, I must not touch the Lord's anointed. I may be in the right, and the Lord's anointed may be altogether in the wrong: nevertheless, it is not for me to touch him. I leave him with the Lord; I must not lift my hand against him. God forbid that I should touch the Lord's anointed.' I repeat: that is bigness, that is spiritual greatness! And so Paul appeals to the Corinthians: "Now for a recompense in like kind . . . be ye also enlarged." The Lord make us big people, in this spiritual sense.

THE CONSTITUENTS OF RECOVERED TESTIMONY

Let us now try to summarise the constituents of recovered testimony, whether that testimony be local or to the world.

It must be born, firstly, as we have seen, out of what we know of Divine comfort in suffering.

Secondly, it must be born out of what we have known of resurrection (whether individual, or collective and local), when all has seemed to be hopeless.

Thirdly, it must be born from what we have learned of Divine love through our own failure. I am sure that this was a great factor in Corinth. How deeply they recognised their failure! They went down, right down in the dust, under the sense of what a miserable failure they had been as a

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local company. And then, smitten with this realisation of their own failure, they discovered that there was love pouring to them, through this Apostle, from the heart of God; and that discovery constituted their new testimony.

Fourthly, it must be born from the brokenness and enlargement of heart that comes through the consciousness of weakness. I suppose, if any people ought to have been conscious of their own weakness, it was those people at Corinth. There are, in fact, indications in this Second Letter that they came almost to the point of despair about themselves. I think this realisation of their own fallibility and untrustworthiness just overwhelmed them, overflowed them. But through it they came to this enlargement of heart. If you and I are groaning under the consciousness of our own failure, we are not going to be petty and mean toward the failures of other people; we are going to be very much more patient, very much more understanding—altogether larger of heart. We are going to say: 'Well, I have had to walk very carefully myself, just there. But for the grace of God, there goes myself!' That is largeness of heart, true brokenness.

Fifthly, and finally, what utterness for the Lord

should result from a sense of responsibility for His honour in the locality and in the world. I think that is what arises here. If that is not present, then all the other means nothing. It must have been brought home to the Corinthians that they were letting the Lord down in the locality. Their condition, the situation among them, was just bringing dishonour to Him. And that provoked a sense of responsibility: 'Oh, we cannot afford to let the Lord down! For the Lord's sake, for the sake of the Name of the Lord, we must put things right amongst ourselves, whatever it costs.' There is much in Isaiah's later chapters about the Name of the Lord in Zion, when recovered. And so, in the church at Corinth, this sense of responsibility for His Name and for His honour, in that vicinity and in that city and in the world, produced a new utterness for the Lord.

We come back to our question: "To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Well, to those, such as we have seen, who accept the implications of the Cross. This is all the outcome, the outworking of the Cross. This all comes out of Isaiah liii. Recovered testimony of this kind can only be as the result of the Cross. The Cross is the basis of everything in all testimony.

T. A-S.

"THE POWER THAT WORKETH IN US"

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen." (Ephesians iii. 20, 21).

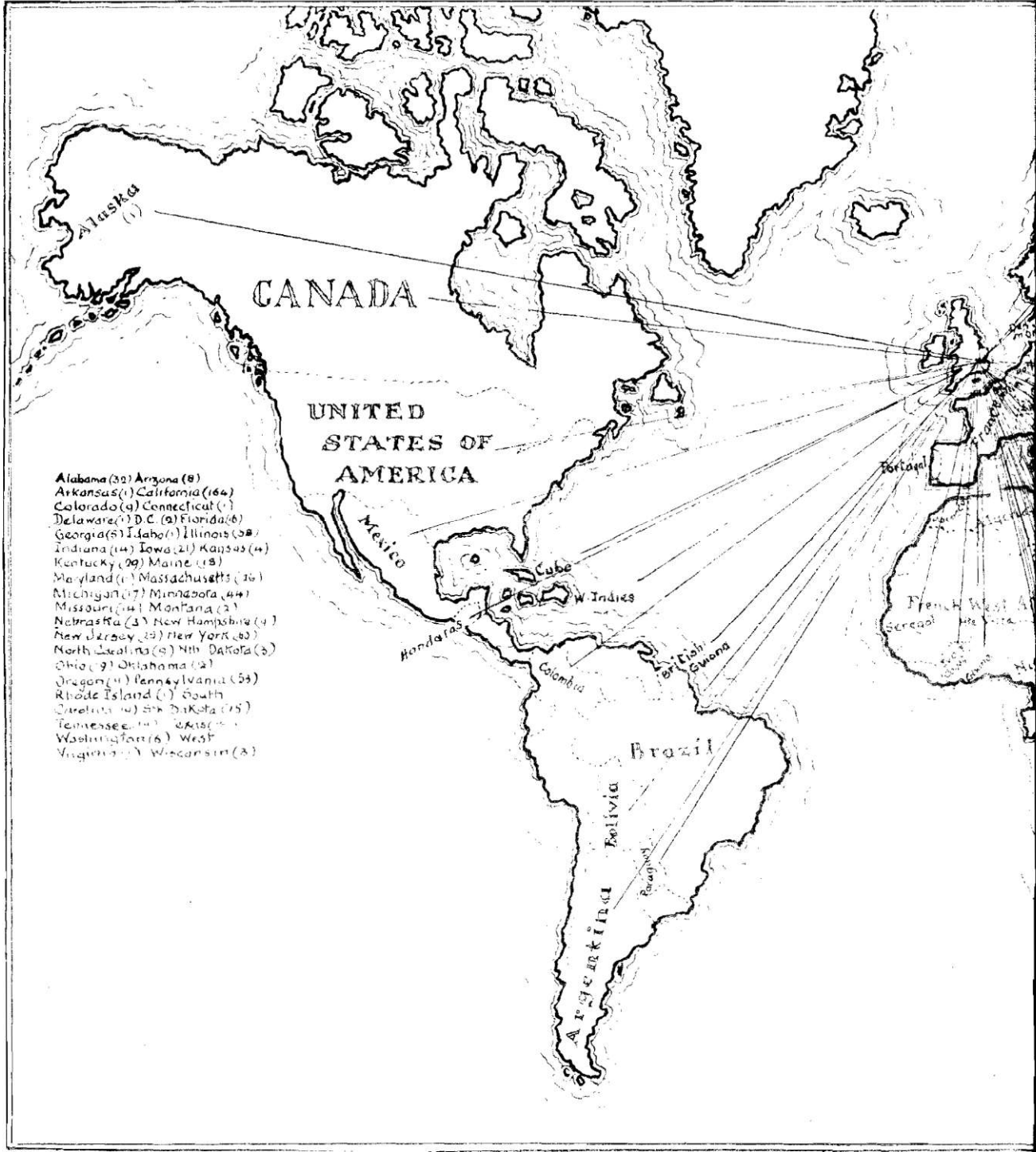
THIS doxology is a familiar one. It is also a very great one—perhaps the greatest of them all. Unlike most of the others, however, it does not appear at the end of the letter. There must therefore be a meaning, not only in what it says, but also in the position which it occupies, a position which is central to the whole message. Like most of Paul's writings, this letter to the Ephesians divides itself into two parts. The first part is largely doctrinal, setting out the vision, while the second is mainly practical, applying the vision to the details of daily life. The doxology is poised in a central position between the two, covering all that has gone before and preparing the way for what is to follow. In both connections we need to be reminded of the One who is 'able to do'.

A REVELATION OF THE IMPOSSIBLE

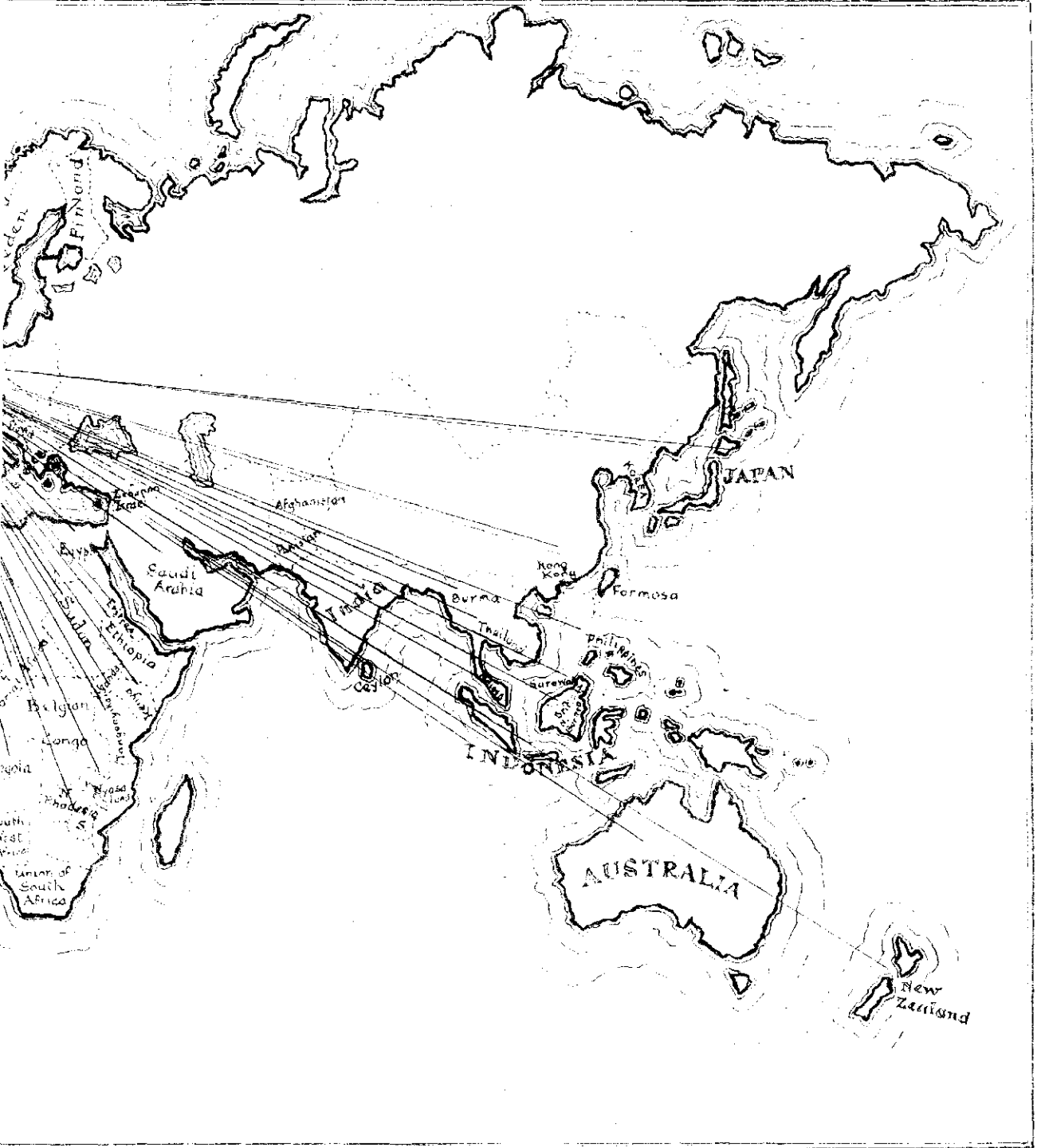
The revelation given in the first three chapters of Ephesians is indeed a striking one. It sets forth the ideal of the Church of Christ—the Church, not according to man's contrivances, but according to the mind of God. The writer himself seems to be overwhelmed by the power and glory of this supreme disclosure of God's plan for His people, since, with the ink still wet and the document only half finished, he has to fall to his knees in earnest prayer to the Father—not this time for light about the truth, but for power that it might truly work in the lives of his readers. This was something not only to be seen but to be accomplished.

This, then, is the first point stressed by the central position of the verse: it serves as a reminder that this unfolding of the related life of the redeemed as members of Christ's Body is meant—as with all other doctrine—for practice and not merely for contemplation. Before we read on any further we must be convinced that this is not God's dream; it is His master-work. This

"A Witness and a Testimony"



The above map of the world with the lines radiating from London are indicated, not states, towns, or numbers in each. We desire our prayer of this little paper.



the Oak) indicates, in general, the scope of this ministry. Only countries
to realize how they are linked up in fellowship by the ministry and the

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particular unveiling of the Lord's objective in redemption is so tremendous, so breath-taking, and apparently so remote from the 'Church' as we know it, that it is necessary to remind ourselves that it is no mere ideal—it works. It can be done. It must be done. But who can do it?

No one questions that to us it is impossible—indeed the implication of the verse is just this. Men can talk about it and pray about it, but none of them, not even Paul himself, can do it; we are forced to turn away to the Lord as the only One who can. The purpose in presenting the revelation is not to offer us a pattern that we can get busy on, but to drive us back to the great Master Builder. If we read this section sincerely, whilst we shall be filled with a great desire that this might be, we shall be filled equally with a profound conviction that neither we nor any other man can do it. How wonderful it all is! How glorious it would be if only the Church in our day were like this! But we recognise that it is quite beyond us. This is the right conclusion. We are meant to react in this way. Any self-confidence on our part would be proof that we have never really understood the implications of the vision.

"All that we . . . think". The verses are meant to make us think. We need to grasp the end in view; to have revelation or illumination as to what alone will satisfy the Lord. For this, too, Paul had to labour in prayer. Before he could begin to unfold his conception of the true nature of the Church, he found himself praying earnestly for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation for his readers. We are meant to consider every one of the massive statements as to this spiritual Body of Christ, to ponder on what is said, to take it all as seriously as did the Saviour who shed His blood for its realisation. This is essential, and this is our part—to think.

"All that we ask". Not only to think, but to ask. It is true that we cannot work it out, but we can and must believe that God meant it to be worked out. He wants it done. So, having thought, we must ask. We must believe that our Lord is serious, that He is in earnest. He has not written the words to provide beautiful thoughts for expositors, or subject-matter for day-dreams; He has stated what He intends should be fulfilled. He who gave the vision is not one to mock us, to leave us to theorize about that which is unattainable. He shows us the end, not merely to help us to move a few steps in that direction, to inspire us to get somewhere near it, but because He means us actually to reach that end.

This, then, is our responsibility: to think and to

ask, to perceive and to be convinced that, however impossible it may appear to us, our faith must be centred in Him who is "able to do".

AN ASSURANCE OF GOD'S ABILITY

We should notice that this is not a general promise, although, like so many others, it may often be applied in a general way. It is blessedly true that in every matter the Lord is "able to do exceedingly abundantly above . . ." But this particular statement is much more specific. It rounds off a clear declaration of the true significance of the Church, and refers to our thoughts and prayers about this very matter. 'Think of it', the Lord seems to say to us. 'Think of it. Do not evade it. Do not be blind to it. Do not explain it away. Do not argue about it. Do not seek alternatives to it. Think, and think hard and long, about what you have just read. And then do what the writer did—bow your knees to the Father. Ask for it. Ask for nothing less. Ask in whole-hearted committal. Ask, and ask in faith. Ask, for God is able to do what you ask and think.'

Of course our conceptions and prayers are always inadequate, and that is why the apostle affirms that God's ability goes far beyond them, "exceeding abundantly above . . ." For the present, however, it may be wisest for us to concentrate on this one fact, the simple assertion that God can do it. Man cannot do it. Human conferences and resolutions cannot do it. Those who believe and proclaim it cannot do it. Only God can do it. But He *can*! He is able. Able *to do*.

Is this presentation of the Church an unattainable ideal? Is it impossible of practical expression here and now? The arguments that this is so are many. As the centuries have passed and the complicating features have multiplied, those arguments have come to seem more and more unanswerable. They may appear to be reinforced by the attempts and failures of some who have made well-intentioned efforts to form such a church. They are made more plausible by the relative success of those who have deliberately chosen a way of compromise. But when everything has conspired to assure us that the vision is impossible, we are still faced with the Lord's assurance that He is "able to do . . ."

Shall we reply that He was able at Ephesus, but is not able in a modern city? Must we conclude that the Lord was able in the first century, but is Himself baffled by the problems of the twentieth? We dare not treat the Word of God so. We admit that much failure may have come through man's efforts to build such a church, when the plain

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statement before us proves that man cannot do it. God, and God alone, is able to do it. To what degree this vision of Church life has been realised through the centuries is not our immediate concern. We have just read Ephesians i, ii and iii. We have been informed as to the mind of the Lord. Now we are asked to commit ourselves to Him, in the confidence that He is capable of making it work in our case; to add our "Amen" to that of Paul's.

GOD'S METHOD—INWARD POWER

We still have three chapters to face. Before hurrying into them, and considering their many practical exhortations, we must first pause and ask how it can all be done. These chapters, with their searching practical demands, are introduced by this doxology concerning God's great sufficiency. The reminder is still valid that only God is able to do. For the smallest practical point, as for the large spiritual vision, we shall need the almighty ability of our wonderful Lord. If we ask: How does He set to work? what is His method? the answer is contained in the same verse. It is "according to the power that worketh in us". God's method is to provide us with a present inward experience of this great ability of His. Once we have fully grasped our complete dependence on this inward energy, we shall be ready to consider the outworking in daily life.

THE PRACTICAL DEMANDS

1. A WORTHY WALK

The first demand of the vision is a worthy walk. "I . . . beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called" (iv. 1). The fact that the Lord "is able to do" must be demonstrated in the daily, hourly demeanour and behaviour of His children.

Walk is a very personal matter. Others may think for us, speak for us, act for us, but we alone are responsible for our walk. Some maintain that a man's character can be discerned by the way he walks. Whether this is so or not, there is no doubt that the Scriptural term "walk" embraces every aspect and phase of our daily life, including our thoughts and attitudes as well as our actions and words. All these, then, must be in harmony and accord with the heavenly calling which we have in Christ.

This walk must be something more than a life which is 'all right', in a general sort of way. It must be worthy of our calling as members of Christ's Body. The governing consideration con-

cerning every detail of our lives must be—no matter whether a thing is right in our own eyes, or whether we can justify or excuse ourselves about it; but—'Is it worthy of one who is in union with Christ?' The Church is not just a group of people who meet together at stated times for worship or witness; it is a community of those whose daily lives constantly show forth Christ. He still walks among men, in the persons of His people. He still reveals the Father's love and the Father's nature—or at least He wishes to do so. This can only be done through the "walk" of His people.

The very greatness of the vision can be our undoing. It may produce some sort of superiority of mind, some spiritual conceit; indeed, apart from the grace of God it is bound to do so. There is nothing more unworthy of our calling than such a haughty spirit. For this reason, perhaps, the qualities specially emphasized are lowliness, meekness, longsuffering and forbearance. Let us make no mistake about this: however exalted our conceptions of Divine truth and however eloquent our advocacy of them, if this meek and lowly spirit is lacking, then we had far better be silent about the revelation of the Church in Ephesians. "With all lowliness and meekness" (iv. 2): who can consistently maintain such a standard? None of us can. Our only hope is in the indwelling power of Him who is "able to do . . ." No doubt this is why the doxology was not reserved for the end of the letter. It is as though the apostle hardly dared mention the kind of life expected of us, until he had made it clear that there is such an inward power to make it possible.

2. KEEPING THE UNITY

The next injunction concerns the matter of 'keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (iv. 3). This whole question of spiritual unity is a profound and complex subject. 'Unity' is a word in great vogue to-day, not least in Christian circles. It is likely to be even more stressed in future days. What is generally implied is an outward unity of association—a unity which has no inward reality and permanence. It is no more than the kind of unity that may be sought or imposed in earthly movements.

The "unity of the Spirit" is something far more inward and radical. It is a unity which is quite impossible in ordinary human experience—so impossible that even the twelve apostles could not achieve it, though they had the Lord Jesus actually living among them. Here again we are cast on the Lord for a miracle. It requires nothing less than the miraculous putting forth of God's power to

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produce and maintain such a unity. It is not enough for us to resolve that we will be united. It is not enough to pray for unity. Every effort of ours will fail, if we do not begin with this conviction that we are utterly cast on God, who alone is able. Thank God that the unity of the Spirit *is* possible "according to the power that worketh in us".

3. A BUILDING MINISTRY

The next main duty impressed upon us is that described as ". . . the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ" (iv. 12). This does not refer to the special ministries, the specialised gifts which are enumerated in the previous verse, but deals with the task committed to every single member, irrespective of special gifts, of age, of sex or of any natural consideration. Just as every organ of a healthy body is a functioning factor in the life of the whole, so every single member of the Body of Christ has a work to do.

"The work of ministering . . ." There is a serious task for us all, and it is for this, among other things, that the power of God is working in us. Nobody is allowed to presume that they have ability, and to proceed on that assumption; nor is anybody allowed to excuse himself because of personal insufficiency, as though that mattered at all. What does matter is that the mighty power of God shall work in and through us, so that the fullness of Christ may be realised.

"Unto the building up . . ." This is the end in view of all work for the Lord, this is the Lord's goal; not our self-satisfaction or the praise of others, but the spiritual increase of the whole. It is a building work. For this we need no official appointment and we are given no title. What we do need is a heart concern for all the Lord's people, and self-abnegation in seeking to help them. We need to have a clear understanding of the goal, if we are rightly to lay hold of the power. Perhaps this accounts for the small measure of "the power that worketh in us"! What outlet has the power? What is our objective? Do we attend meetings in order to receive only, or in order to give? Are we always agitating about other people praying for us, or are we getting busy with our privileged task of praying for them? Are we jealous for our own place, or for the place given to our friends, or are we moved by a pure desire for the well-being of all the Lord's people? These, and many other considerations, will soon arise if we face the challenge of ministry in the Body. And more than ever we shall find ourselves thrown back on the Lord's resources.

4. HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

After this there follows a long section, from chapter v. 6 to vi. 9, which sets out in detail a variety of ways in which our knowledge of the Lord is tested in human relationships. The vision must have its practical effect in the assembly, in the home, and in daily work. Each one of these environments demands an extremely high standard —so much so that it is taken for granted that we shall fail, unless we have discovered the secret of the omnipotence of God working in our "inward man".

What wife can hope to measure up to the standard represented by the Church's relationship to her Lord? What husband would dare to compare his own affection with the redeeming love of Christ for His own? What child can succeed in fulfilling the fifth, or any other, commandment? What employee can render the kind of service that Christ deserves, or what employer always acts as under the eye of the heavenly Master? We cannot do these things. And yet if our faith is not to be exposed as dismal failure they must be done.

It is so easy, either to skim lightly over these commands, as though we were fulfilling them satisfactorily, or merely to use them as a basis for condemning the faults of others. We are meant to give them our closest attention, and to determine that they must be fulfilled. But we are also meant to apply to them the words which we have already read. At every challenge we have to hasten back to the words of chapter iii, verse 20, and cast ourselves anew on the only One who "is able to do". The impossible can be done, even in our case, because of "the power that worketh in us".

5. THE SPIRITUAL WARFARE

If all the other demands are too great for us, what shall we say of this call to wrestle with principalities and powers? Here we are certainly taken into a realm that is quite beyond us. And yet this wrestling must be done. It is not an optional matter, but one of vital significance if the vision is not just to end in empty words. If we are in the Church we are in the conflict; what the Lord wants is that we should stand in the victory. Many Christians never seriously face the issue of Ephesians vi. 10 - 20. Others have tried to do so, but have relied on phraseology or vehemence of language, only to become the Devil's laughing-stock. We shall fail if we think that we can do it ourselves. We are in the way of success and victory when we realise our own helplessness and turn afresh to the Lord in deep dependence on Him.

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So from every angle we are directed back to this central consideration. It is vain to read on into chapters iv, v and vi, unless faith has really laid hold on iii. 20. Apart from this promise, the many commandments only mock us. How can we walk worthily, or keep the unity of the Spirit, or build one another up? How can we glorify the Lord in the home and at work, and, above all, how can we wrestle victoriously with the hosts of evil? The

answer is: "Now unto him that is able to do . . ." These things can be, for He can do them. They can be in our case, for this same Lord dwells in our hearts by faith. And they can be at this very moment, for His present power is already at work within. This promise is for now and it is for us. "Now unto him that is able . . . unto him be the glory in the church . . ." Amen!

H. F.

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

THE TRUTH ABOUT OURSELVES

YOU do not have to journey into a far country to be a prodigal son. Bernard had proved this. From the time when he began to grow up he had been a very bad son, bringing much pain and distress to his father, and almost breaking his mother's heart. The father had been most patient. Again and again he made amends for his son's wrongdoing, paying back what he owed or had stolen, and even after Bernard had been to prison, still giving him a welcome in the family home. The sad story went on through the years, with Bernard bringing much shame to the family name, and repaying his parents' kindness with still worse behaviour.

His mother fell ill and died. Most people felt that it was really sorrow of heart that had killed her, and even Bernard became more serious for a short while after that. However, he soon went back to his evil ways, till at last the father had to refuse to help him any more. Then the father died also.

Now, as the father had been a wealthy man, Bernard had every hope that at least some of the money would come to him; so that, when he received a letter asking him to attend the reading of the Last Will and Testament, he made sure to be there, and to arrive in good time. In the large room which he knew so well, quite a number of the family and friends were gathered. They did not seem very pleased to see him, but this did not worry Bernard who had only come to find out how much he was going to get.

As the hour struck, the family lawyer came into the room. After a short delay, he stood up and reminded the group that they had been called to hear the contents of the dead man's Will, and to know his last wishes. Then he took up the document and began to read. The Will opened with some legal sentences, named the Executor, and then went on to give a history of the wayward behaviour of the only son, Bernard. Calmly and coldly the reader went on with his task, telling, in

the dead father's own words, the whole story of the selfish and evil life which had wrecked their home, ruined the mother's health, and brought such bitter sorrow to the father's last years.

Bernard grew red and very angry. The matters described were true enough—he did not dispute that—but he had not come to the house to be reminded of his own past misdeeds. At last he could bear it no longer. He rose from his chair, strode out of the room, slamming the door behind him, and left the house. The lawyer paused just for a moment, and then quietly went on with his reading. At last the sad story was finished. Then the document continued: "But in spite of all this, he is my son, and I love him still. For this reason, even though he does not deserve anything, I propose to give him all that I possess. There is, however, one condition. He must attend the reading of this my Last Will and Testament, and must wait and listen to the end. If he is still present when the reading is concluded, then he is to inherit all my possessions." Then the lawyer went on to read the rest of the Will, which described how the money should be divided among the others present if the son did not wait to hear the whole testament.

And, as a matter of fact, that is how it was divided. Bernard lost it all. He lost it, not because of his past sins, but because he was not willing to face up to them. All could have been his—on the one condition, that he did not run away from the truth about himself.

In our Bibles we have the New Testament. It tells us of what our Lord Jesus has given to us as a result of His death. We, too, have filled His heart with sorrow at our bad ways, and have no right to expect anything from Him. But, like Bernard's father, the Lord loves us still. All the riches of His grace are given to us. In our case, also, there is one condition. It is that we should face up to the fact of our sins.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and right-

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

eous to forgive us our sins . . ." (I John 1. 9). Many people are like Bernard. They want to hear what the New Testament says about God's rich blessings, but they turn away from it when they begin to read about their own sinful life. They are

not prepared to own up to their need. For this reason they forfeit all the blessings of God's love. These blessings are freely given, in spite of all our unworthiness; but they are only given to those who are ready to admit the truth about themselves.

H. F.

"BECAUSE HE SAW HIS GLORY"

II. THE PURPOSE OF GOD

KEEPING in mind the passages that we have been considering (Isaiah vi, II Chronicles xxvi, and John xii. 37 - 41), let us try to summarise what we have been saying so far.

GOD REQUIRES A PEOPLE OF PURPOSE

We have noted, firstly, that, in relation to His full purpose, God is ever found seeking and taking up a people in whom that purpose has been revealed, and whose life is constituted according to it. God's saving work, and God's conforming work, are governed by a purpose, which is centred in His Son. Nothing that God does is, in His mind and intention, something in itself, or an end in itself; all is related to His clear and definite purpose. The Bible throughout shows us that God is ever in quest of a people who have seen what that purpose is, and who are under His hand to be constituted according to that purpose, to serve Him in it. That is the explanation of the whole Bible, and that is what lies behind this passage in the sixth chapter of Isaiah in particular.

I hesitate to pass on from that, lest its real significance and value should be missed. I used a phrase earlier which I think touches this question quite directly and seriously. I said that, unless Christians are governed by this consciousness of purpose, in their being saved and in God's dealings with them, there is lacking a constituent, and there is a constitutional lack, in their Christian life. We know that, in the physical realm, if a person has a constitutional deficiency, he or she is always open to, a prey to, the many maladies which are floating about. They lack resistance to the germs that are in the air. They are caught this way and that way; they have no defences against these things; and so they are the people that go down whenever there is something about. It is a constitutional deficiency.

Now, if there is a 'constitutional deficiency' like that in the Christian life—whether it be of an individual or of a company, or of the Church as a whole—that individual or Church will be in a state of weakness; it will be suffering from many maladies, and it will be caught by all sorts of things that

are floating around. How true that is of many Christians—they seem to be caught by anything that's going! First they go off on this line, and then on that, and then they are caught by something else. You never know what is the next thing that is going to get them! They lack this central, unifying, defensive thing—the knowledge and consciousness of the purpose of God concerning the Church, concerning His people. God is ever looking for and seeking a people that He can take up as an instrument in relation to His ultimate and full purpose.

ONLY GOD'S PURPOSE CONFERS SIGNIFICANCE

We went on to say that it is not the person or the persons—it is not the instrument, be it individual or collective, *as such*—that are the primary factors. There is sovereignty in this, and you never know what God is going to take up. He defeats all our calculations and judgments as to what He will use. It is not the vessel or the instrument or the person or the place; it is the purpose, the purpose of God's sovereign choosing, which gives significance to anyone or anything. We are not called because of what *we are*. We are 'the called according to His purpose.'

Is it not an impressive thing to see how many of the great vessels that God used had a strange end to their ministry?

Take Moses: God buries him, and no man can find his place of burial (Deut. xxxiv. 6). You can never put up a stone over the grave of Moses and say anything about *him*—what a great man he was. God just buried him.

What of Isaiah? We are entirely dependent upon tradition as to what happened to Isaiah. It is said by tradition that he is the one referred to in Hebrews xi. 37, as having been "sawn asunder". But that is mere tradition; the Bible tells us nothing about it.

Think of Jeremiah. What a man Jeremiah was! While we have said what we have about the vessels, nevertheless these men did a great work, and

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suffered greatly, and took on a very great significance, because of their function, But Jeremiah—what a man! What about his end? Does anybody know what happened to Jeremiah at the end? No, it is all guess-work. No one knows. He may have died in Egypt with the last company that went over there (Jer. xliii. 6, xliv. 1 - 30). But we don't know—he just disappears. How strange of the Lord to let a man just go out like that!

What about Paul? A great servant of the Lord—no doubt about that; but, so far as the Bible is concerned, he is just left in prison in Rome, and that is the end of the story. Surely he was worthy of something more than that at the end!

Do you see the point? God is not building a memorial to the name, to the instrument. Jeremiah—wherever he is, or wherever he has gone, we don't know. But the Bible does say this: "Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus . . ." (II Chron. xxxvii. 22; Ezra i. 1). It is the *function*, it is the *purpose*, that God has laid hold of. The man just sinks into the great vocation; it is that that matters. And if the record leaves Paul in prison, tradition may say much about his death, but there he is. Ah! what about the purpose that he has served? God has looked after that! After all, it is true that with all these, and so many others, they are only known to us now because of their service to the purpose of God. In a certain sense, that is their immortality.

Yes: significance is not attached to any name, person, or instrumentality; it is only attached to God's purpose concerning His Son. And you and I will take on value only in the measure in which God's Son is truly served, and comes into His place, by means of us.

GOD MEETS ALL NEEDS FOR HIS PURPOSE

We further went on to point out that God is faithful to His purpose, and—given that there is no deliberate unbelief or pride—He meets all the needs for the realisation of His own purpose. That was the real meaning of this vision that came to Isaiah. We showed in what a devastating situation Isaiah, as a young man, found himself, at the time of that vision. There was the tragedy of Uzziah; there was the state of the people. Read those first chapters of Isaiah's prophecies, and see what a state existed. It was enough to put any young man off the ministry—enough to be utterly disconcerting. It was sufficient to bring complete despair,

hopelessness; to make him feel, 'Nothing is possible'.

But then, God is not a God of circumstances, in this way; God is the God of purpose. And so, because of the purpose with which this man Isaiah was related, God came in with the vision, the saving vision, and by it delivered him—and what a vision it was! God meets the need of His own purpose—provided, as I have said, that there are not those things that always stay the hand of God—deliberate unbelief, or pride. God can do nothing where there is pride. But, given there is an openness of heart, a purity of spirit, toward Himself, with all the tragedy, with all the human weakness, with all our own failure, God meets the need of the purpose, and works all things for good in those who are called according thereto.

THE PURPOSE OFTEN INVOLVES DISILLUSIONMENT

Further, we pointed out that this ministry, this calling, this function, concerning the purpose of God, is often fraught with deep experiences of disillusionment, of disappointment, and of breakdown, in the realms in which we had great expectations and upon which we had set our hopes. So it was with Isaiah over king Uzziah. Isaiah's whole life had been bound up with Uzziah. God had blessed him, God had used him; there is no doubt about it, the Lord had been with king Uzziah; he had done a great work for God. What a devastating thing it is to our hearts and to our confidence, when we see something, or someone, which has been so evidently and wonderfully raised up and used and blessed of God, just coming to spiritual tragedy. It makes us feel: 'Then, who can be saved? who can go through? Can we hope that we shall do better? Can we hope that the thing with which our lives are bound up will have a better end than that?' We feel there is always the terrible possibility that it will go that way with us, and with what we have given ourselves to.

There will be disillusionments, there will be disappointments, there will be heartbreak. But note—the thing that saved Isaiah, in a day like that, was that God established a relationship between him and something that was above it all: "I saw the Lord, high and lifted up"—the anchorage in Heaven. We never cease to wonder, do we, at that end of the Apostle Paul. It constitutes a problem—but it is a glorious problem. If ever there had been a man poured out for God, it was Paul; if ever a man was jealous for God's highest and fullest, he was; if ever a man suffered in the interests of God's purpose, Paul did. And now, at the last, the

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churches throughout Asia, who owed their spiritual life to him, had turned away from him; friends around him had left him; he sees his work apparently falling to pieces. Your amazement is that the man himself doesn't go to pieces. You think that if ever a man ought to be in the slough of despond, really cast down and under things, Paul ought to be. Here he is, a lonely man, taken out of his life-work, shut up in prison; converts and friends, and even fellow-labourers, turning away from him—"Demas hath forsaken me", he says. If ever a man ought to be down, he ought to be.

But look—his link is with Heaven! He has seen 'the Lord high and lifted up', and that has saved him in this terrible hour. 'These things said Isaiah, because he saw His glory . . . ' Oh, that we might be so strongly and clearly and positively related with the One in Heaven, that all these things which could break our hearts, and send us right down to the bottom, just do not have that effect. We may have our dark hours—I have no doubt that these men had their dark hours; we may have our times of despondency. But—but—there is something that is more than that. It is the One who is above—we have seen *Him*.

EXPERIENCES RELATED TO THE PURPOSE

Next, such an instrument, related to the purpose, is brought into experiences that definitely bear upon that purpose: that is, they are constituted *according to* the purpose of God. The purpose of God, in relation to His Son, is that Christ shall ultimately fill all things, and all things shall be summed up in Him. He is to be the universal Lord, and what is true of Him, characteristically, is to become true of the Church: it is to take its character from Him, in order that, so doing, it may be the very vessel and instrument of His government in all the coming ages. If that is so, then a very great deal has got to be done in us to make it possible!

For this is not just an official thing: it is not that God just takes us up and puts us into an official position, willy-nilly, as though it didn't matter what sort of people we were. Oh, no—a lot has got to be done to bring a people there. And so we find that in such instruments, as we have them in the Word of God (and they are only indicative of God's abiding methods and principles), the thing to which they were called was wrought into their very being. Isaiah meant this when he said: "I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel" (Is. viii. 18). He had given his sons certain names, and those names were des-

criptive of the very things that God was doing. To Ezekiel, the Lord said: "Say, I am your sign" (Ezek. xii. 11). 'When you see God's dealings with me, what God is doing in me, the way God is leading me, then you will see what God is after.' That is an essential thing for any instrument of God.

Let me repeat: You cannot just go and retail Divine truths. You may give good addresses, clever addresses, even brilliant addresses, on Bible subjects; you may give very impressive discourses on the Bible; and people may say they enjoyed it—even go as far as to say that, for the moment, they were helped by it. But you must remember that that is not good enough for the Lord. What the Lord is seeking to do is to create a *constitution*. I do not of course mean a system of laws and regulations, such as when one speaks of the 'Constitution' of a nation. I mean what we mean by 'our constitution': how we are made, what we are made of; our make-up; the very substance of our being. And God is seeking to make a constitution in a people. Any instrument that He is to use must have that constitution, and it has got to come right out of what God has done in us. That explains a very great deal.

EVERY MEMBER AFFECTED

Perhaps you may be thinking, 'How does all this apply to me? How does it affect me? This seems to concern some ideal instrument, perhaps some ideal people, for ministry; or some visionary conception of a church like that. I'm a very simple, ordinary individual: surely I, with a great many more like myself, don't come into that?' Let me say here, with very great emphasis, that such a vessel, such an instrument, is not just made up of public speakers, outstanding personalities, particular ministries and ministers. If you gather with others for prayer, your very coming together with others in that way, even if you do not pray audibly, but are just there in the spirit of prayer and co-operation, makes you as vital a part of that purpose as any particular ministry.

Remember: though there may be men who minister the Word, those whom we point out as 'ministering servants of the Lord'—we would call them 'the Lord's servants'—remember, they will never fulfil their ministry unless you are behind them in prayer. Paul was very, very sure about that: he let us know quite definitely that even he (of course *he* would not have said anything like that—'even I'; but we say, 'even he') could not have fulfilled his great calling, his elect ministry, unless there had been praying people behind him all the time. They were fulfilling the ministry.

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That is only one aspect of the whole matter. In a corporate thing—I do not mean an organized thing, but an *organism*—every part matters; the whole is affected by the least part. And so you are affecting this matter in some way. Even if you are not functioning at all, you are affecting the whole thing. We are called into something that involves us in responsibility.

NEED FOR ABIDING

Let us now go a further step in this summary. We are not actually touching the record and the narrative; we are drawing out the lessons. When we think of the tragedy of Uzziah, we must recognize that the way of safety is the way of abiding deeply in God—abiding under the heavenly government. What a different story would have been told about the end of Uzziah, if he had not taken things into his own hands and sought to become something in himself; if he had not presumed, or assumed, that God's blessing and God's using of him gave him the personal right to take hold of the things of God. But pride found a place in his heart. Until he became 'strong', he was greatly blessed; but then he became lifted up in heart, even through the blessing of the Lord, and the story began to change: it became tragedy in the place of glory. If only we would abide in that place of utter dependence, utter submission, where we are not on the throne, but the Lord is, the story might end so differently; spiritual power would remain to the end. How necessary it is for us to keep in that place of abiding, in that place of deep meekness and humility.

A CRITICAL EPOCH IN WORLD HISTORY

Now, with this summary before us, let us look at this vision: because it is the vision, itself, that covers all that we have said, and more.

"In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the foundations of the thresholds were moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke" (Is. vi. 1-4).

The reference to the time factor is emphatic: "In the year that king Uzziah died". Yes, it was a very, very crucial and significant time. If we could grasp this, we should have a new and wonderful opening up of heavenly meaning. For the

death of Uzziah was not merely an incident or an event in the history of Israel: it took place at a period when some of the greatest changes of all time were taking place in this world. It may well be that the present time goes beyond it, in this respect; but that century, eight hundred years before Christ, was the most critical century of the history of this world, and especially in the history of the things of God. The final departure of the glory—the *final departure* of the glory from Jerusalem—was about to take place. Jerusalem had been the place of the glory, the place of His feet, the place of His government. Jerusalem had been the seat of the Divine and heavenly operations. It was there that the glory was, in the Temple. And now, the glory was about to depart for ever from Jerusalem.

Shortly after Uzziah's death, Rome was founded—the great power which would eventually be the doom of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation. When the glory goes, see what begins: Rome is born. The government departs from Jerusalem. The throne becomes empty, and has never been occupied again. The priesthood, corrupted, has been dismissed; it has never been there since. The glory, the throne, the priesthood, all go at this time. Everything that was here of that old system has now come, or is coming, to its close. What a critical time this was! The temple forsaken; the glory departed; the throne permanently vacated; the priesthood corrupted and dismissed. "In the year that king Uzziah died"—the time factor is tremendous—"I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train"—and that word is the word for the High Priest's garment—His high priestly garment 'fills the temple.'

THE HEAVENLY COUNTERPART

But it is a heavenly temple; it is a heavenly throne; it is a heavenly priesthood. We have leapt suddenly out of the old dispensation into the time in which we live. John understood all this when he said: 'These things said Isaiah, because he saw His glory; and he spake of Him.' We are in the day of the throne on high: ". . . far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name . . ." (Eph. i. 21). We are in the day of the heavenly priesthood: "He ever liveth to make intercession" (Heb. vii. 25). We are in the day of the heavenly temple. And none of us would say that the exchange has meant loss. It is tremendous gain. When everything here has broken down; everything has proved a failure and a disappointment and a tragedy; everything here has gone: then that which abides for ever, a throne,

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a priesthood, a house, a temple, comes into view.

You see, this brings us right over to the present time. This vision is not a vision that belonged to a certain prophet who lived eight hundred years before Christ; it is not just a bit of history belonging to an age far back in the distant past. This is something that is right up to date. Jesus has fulfilled all this—He *is* the fulfilment of all this—the Throne, the Priesthood, the spiritual House. Do you see? *We* are in this vision, or ought to be. And it ought to be more than a vision: we ought to be in the reality of it. This belongs to us, not to Isaiah; it is ours.

Is it true? Well, is it true that the earthly ceased? that the glory departed, the nation was scattered, the throne was vacated, the priesthood ceased to be of any value? Is it true? Of course it is true. Is it true that the glorious heavenly counterpart of that has come in?—that there is One upon the Throne, far above all? Is it true that He is exercising a heavenly Priesthood on our behalf? Is it true that there is a spiritual House? "His train *filled* the temple." You see what we are brought to—a tremendous spiritual reality. It is an immense comfort and encouragement to know that, when the earthly breaks down, the heavenly never collapses. When there is everything of disappointment down here, it goes on.

That is why Paul survived his disappointments; that is why he got through those last terrible days or months of his imprisonment, with everything down here going to pieces—why he got through triumphantly: because this vision of Isaiah was a reality to him. The Throne was not empty; the Priesthood was not set aside; the House was a reality. Has it sometimes constituted for you a very real problem: that here is a man, alone, cut off from his life-work, the churches forsaking him, spiritual decline setting in, things all going wrong, error and false prophets creeping into the churches—and Paul gives us that matchless presentation of the glorious Church, and its unity and its oneness!? You are inclined to say, Paul has surely, surely lost his reason; he is in the realm of pure imagination and wishful thinking!

Oh, no. This is of very great practical importance to you and to me. Look at conditions in the Church to-day on this earth. Look at it, if you dare! Is it not enough to make one say, 'What nonsense to talk about this Church, as presented in the Letter to the Ephesians! It is not being practical, it is not being real, it is not facing facts! The *facts* are these: divisions, and schisms, and conflicts amongst Christians and Christian bodies, and all this awful state amongst individual Christ-

ians. *These* are the *facts*; Ephesians is *fiction*!' Ah, but it was while facing that situation, and being alive to it, and knowing what was happening and what was coming, that Paul wrote that letter. He was not mad, not imagining things. He was not saying: 'This is how things ought to be. They really are like this, but this is how they ought to be'. No, he is saying: 'This is it.'

THE PURPOSE SECURED IN HEAVEN

I don't know what has got to happen to us, but something must happen to us, to get us to that position where we refuse to accept things as they are down here, but hold on to things as they are in the mind, intention and purpose of God; where we see through to something else. That is the real force of this vision. Everything is secured—not down here, but up there. 'High and lifted up'—it is secured up there. Do you ever have some doubts about your own getting through, about your own salvation? Whether spiritually you are going to win through? Whether you will survive? Have you any questions or doubts about that? Do you sometimes wonder whether you will finish up out of things?

Well, now, you will accept this about your salvation: that it is secured in Heaven. Your salvation is secured in Christ in Heaven, and is not therefore subject to conditions down here. Why not believe that *God's whole purpose* is just as secure in Heaven, and not subject to things down here? It is so easy to sing: 'God is working His purpose out as year succeeds to year'—oh, yes, we can sing it; but do we realise that this whole purpose of God *is* secured in Heaven? That is what Paul saw. It *cannot* be defeated, because God cannot be. It cannot fail, because that Throne cannot be vacated. It *cannot* break down, because that Priesthood is an eternal priesthood, and will not cease. "He *ever* liveth"—that is the point; the emphasis is upon the 'ever'—"He *ever* liveth to make intercession". "He is able to save to the uttermost"—and that word means, as you know, 'right on to the end'.

If that is true about our salvation, because it is secured up there, 'high and lifted up', it is true about the purpose, His purpose. It is secured—not in Uzziah, thank God. It is secured in Jesus Christ. It is not secured in an earthly temple at Jerusalem; it is secured in a heavenly temple, a spiritual house—'in the heavenlies, in Christ Jesus.'

I hope that you are beginning to see—that the vision is becoming yours. This is *our* vision, not Isaiah's vision. It is carried right over to us: 'He spake of *Him*'. And all this—all the ministry of

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Isaiah, and of Paul, was 'because they saw His glory'. Oh, that it might be true in our case—their persistence, their going on, their surviving, their triumphing, their effectual witness, their ministry, their service! These were the fruits, the

effects, of seeing His glory. Would that we might be brought again, in a new way, to see the Exalted Lord—the *Exalted* Lord; that the effects of that might come upon us as they did upon Isaiah.

T.A.S.

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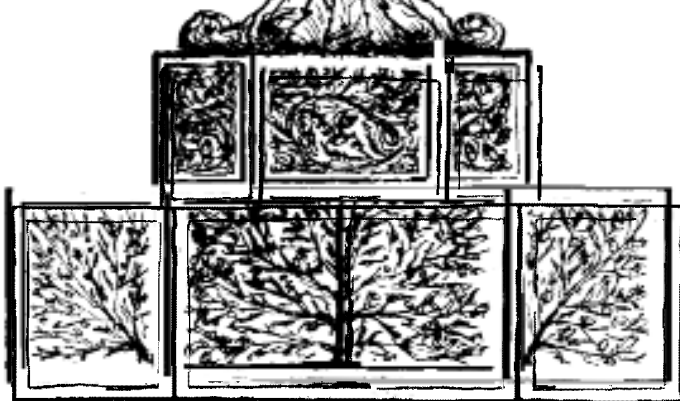
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Vol. 37. No. 3.

May, 1959.

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 (literally—*full knowledge*) of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we be no longer children . . . "

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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.

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MAY — JUNE, 1959

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EDITORIAL

“ACCORDING TO CHRIST”

IN concluding this brief series of editorials, for the time being, we are going to sum up this matter of the Church and the churches by looking more seriously at the great crisis or turning point which we have in the New Testament.

From what we can discern in the relevant literature, it would seem that very few indeed—and some of these only indistinctly—have recognised the tremendous nature of the events centring around Stephen (Acts vi, vii). A more careful consideration of Acts vii in the light of the whole context of the New Testament will lead to some very deep and far-reaching conclusions.

In the first place, through Stephen there is given a retrospective confirmation and explanation of some of the most momentous and critical things said by the Lord Himself in the days of His flesh. Too little account has been taken of those intimations or declarations of His that with Him and resultant from Him an entirely new economy and different order was imminent.

In the second place, with Stephen there was the forcefulness of Heaven breaking in with two mighty meanings. One, shock-treatment to the Church,

which, with its first leaders, was settling down to a semi-Judaistic Christianity, with the Temple, synagogues, and Jerusalem as an accepted system. The other, the Divine foreknowledge and prediction that in the approximate period of forty years (a significant period) the whole of that centralized and crystallized order would be shattered, and scattered like the fragments of a smashed vessel over the earth, never again to be reconstituted in the dispensation.

Stephen, in his inspired pronouncement, did some devastating things. He first traced the Divine movement from Abraham, along a *spiritual* line (back of all temporal and material instrumentalities), to Christ, showing that what was in the Divine mind throughout was a spiritual and heavenly system and order, culminating in Jesus, the Christ. He next showed that historically the people concerned had failed to recognise that spiritual meaning, that heavenly concept, and had done two things. They had made the earthly and temporal an end in itself, and given fulness and finality to it. Then they had persecuted, cast out, or killed those who, seeking to make the spiritual and heavenly

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

paramount, had rebuked their shortsightedness and condemned their unspirituality. According to Stephen this was a vicious and evil force that was at work even when the symbols and types of the heavenly were being *formally* and ritualistically practised.

The effect of Stephen's pronouncement, and the significance of his anointing with the Holy Spirit—as will be seen from some of his clauses—was to wipe out and set aside the entire Old Testament order, as represented by and centred in the Temple at Jerusalem. The significance of the advent of Christ was the displacing of what was—and is—of time, by that which is eternal; the displacing of that which is of earth by that which is of Heaven; the displacing of the temporal by the spiritual; and the displacing of the *merely* local by the universal. The cult of Israel was finished for the age.

One, perhaps supreme, factor in the significance of Stephen was what he saw at the end and said with almost his last breath: "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" (vii. 56). Here we have the central and basic reality of true New Testament Christianity, of the Church and the churches—Jesus on the right hand of God. The government, the authority, the headquarters, vested in the ascended Lord, and centred *in Heaven*; not in Jerusalem, nor anywhere else on earth. Then, this is the only occasion on which, after Jesus Himself had used the title, He is spoken of as Son of Man. This is *not* the Jewish title, it is the universal designation. In Daniel we have the Son of Man as receiving from God "dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that *all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him*" (Dan. vii. 14). That is the meaning of Stephen's vision and utterance.

The Jewish rulers and Stephen's accusers were quick and shrewd enough to recognise the implications, for they had no less and no other import than that the 'Temple made with hands' was finished; the dispensation of the Law was ended. There was an implicit call to the Church of Jesus to leave the Temple and all that went with it and to move into the greater, the fuller, and the abiding reality. What startling and impressive significance this gives to two other things immediately related. As we see these, we are forced to exclaim: 'Oh, wonderful!'

The first is that Paul comes right into the picture at this very point. Was Stephen God's vessel for this great heavenly revelation? Was he the

spearhead of the heavenly movement? Was he the voice of Heaven, proclaiming, in a crucial and dangerous hour in the Church's history, the true and eternal nature of its constitution and vocation? Did they do him to death, driven by the sinister intelligence of the evil powers who know the incalculable importance of a Church on *heavenly* ground? Very well then, Heaven answers, and, in the hour of Hell's vicious and destructive onrush, brings into immediate view the man who will impart for all time the revelation in fulness of those realities inherent in Stephen's brief ministry. What an answer! What an example of the Son of Man being at the Throne! The same forces of destruction will pursue Paul for his life, but that Throne will see the revelation given in fulness, and destruction suspended until the work is done.

The second impressive thing is that the very work of evil, intended to curtail and end this essential development, was made the very means of effecting it. The Church universal, and its representation worldwide, took its rise from that very hour and event. Peter and James may remain in Jerusalem, and some die-hard legalists may circle around the latter at least; but God is moving on, and they will have either to fall in or be left in limitation.

Now all this, with its tremendously searching implications, has much to say to Christianity to-day.

Because of the close likeness, both of Stephen's position and of his interpretation of the times, to the Letter to the Hebrews, some have attributed that letter to him. There is no value here in pursuing the matter into the realm of authorship or textual criticism, but the identity of position in both is impossible to mistake. Indeed, 'Hebrews' could very rightly be regarded as Stephen's (or, for that matter, Paul's) full presentation of the crisis and change of dispensations.

The tragedy is that, with 'Hebrews' in their hands, responsible leaders of the Church can still adhere to a system and form which is but the extension or carry-over of the Old Testament, with certain changes of phraseology. The *immensity* of the change and gap has certainly not been apprehended. Some of the most terrible things in the whole Bible are contained in that letter in relation to the crisis and the two ways and realms. The issue is no less than that of life and death.

All this has much to say regarding the true nature of the Church and the churches. He that hath eyes to see, let him see!

EDITOR.

(concluded)

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THE ARM OF THE LORD

VIII. THE CROSS AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

Reading : Isaiah lxi. 1 — lxii. 1a.

WE come now to yet a further aspect of this so many-sided fruit of the Cross of the Lord Jesus. We remember that the first three verses of this sixty-first chapter of Isaiah, so full, were taken up by our Lord Jesus Himself. After His baptism the heavens were opened, and the Spirit descended and came upon Him: it was the great moment of His anointing as the Servant, who had just passed, symbolically, by the way of the Cross, as represented by His baptism. Now, anointed, He meets the enemy in the wilderness, and worsts him completely on all points; then, returning from the wilderness in the power of the Spirit, He comes to Nazareth, where He has been brought up.

On the Sabbath day, He enters into the synagogue, and the Scriptures are handed to Him. He opens them at this point in Isaiah's prophecies, and reads these verses; and, when He has read them, He hands the roll back to the Ruler of the synagogue and sits down. (This, contrary to our custom, was a sign that He had something to say. If we have something to say, we usually stand up; but in the synagogues, if they had something to say, they sat down.) And it says that 'the eyes of all' that were assembled 'were fastened upon Him'—because He had sat down; they saw He had something to say. "And he began to say unto them, To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears" (Luke iv. 14 — 21).

We thus see that the Lord Jesus was appropriating this part of Isaiah to Himself. All along we have recognised that there is a relationship of these prophecies to the Lord Jesus and to this dispensation, as well as a connection with the history of Israel. And this is what we now come to.

THE ANOINTING OF THE HEAD FLOWS DOWN TO THE MEMBERS

But notice, as we begin, that this anointing, while resting first of all upon 'the Lord's Servant'—for that is the title of Christ in Isaiah: "Behold my servant" (Isa. xlii. 1)—while this anointing of course rests upon Him and relates, fully and supremely, to Him, as the Head, the language of the prophetic narrative immediately afterwards makes an abrupt transition to 'they', 'them'; 'ye', 'you', 'your'. After this declaration concerning the anointing of the Servant, it goes on:

"And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations" (lxi. 4). The people of God derive the values, come into the good, of this anointing. It is as though the anointing upon Him, as Head, just flowed down and embraced the whole of His membership—the members of Christ.

That is why we read the first fragment of the next chapter: "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace . . ." As I said in the previous chapter, there is so much, in these later prophecies of Isaiah, about Zion—about the good of the anointing being found in Zion, Zion inheriting all these values. And Zion, as we know, is the Old Testament figure of the Church. We were speaking, in that chapter, about Zion's light: "Arise, shine, for thy light is come" (lx. 1)—this is the testimony recovered. Here, in chapter lxi, we move into Zion's life and Zion's liberty.

"TO PROCLAIM LIBERTY TO THE CAPTIVES"

You notice, first of all, that this is a message to Zion, to the Church. All this has to have its fulfilment, its realisation, in the Lord's people. Israel, at this time, were in exile in Babylon, in a state of bondage and spiritual death, and the prophecies have to do with their deliverance, their liberation from that bondage, from that death, the bringing of this people out into life and into liberty. Now I have said that Jesus took to Himself this Scripture about the anointing of the Lord being upon Him, "to proclaim liberty to the captives", and so on. But you remember that the earthly Zion, the earthly Jerusalem—in other words, the Jewish people—never did come into the reality of this liberation. They missed all these values. *That* Zion did not inherit the values of His anointing. But the Church has inherited it all. This has become the inheritance of the *spiritual* Israel, the *spiritual* people of God. Judaism—'Israel after the flesh'—was the supreme antagonist of the anointing. By their weapon of legalism, they slew Him. It must be a people who answer to all this that is said about the anointing, who come into these further values of the second part of this chapter.

That is, it must be a people who can appreciate the Good Tidings, because they are meek: that was not true of Israel after the flesh. It must be a

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people of a broken heart, and that was not true of Israel after the flesh. It must be a people conscious that they really are captives, and that was not true of the Jews in our Lord's day. They thought, they believed, that of all people on the earth they were the freest, the ones who knew least about bondage : that was one of the points of controversy with them and the Lord Jesus (John viii. 33). It must be a people who feel that their state is one of imprisonment, if they are to enjoy the "opening of the prison to them that are bound"; and so on. The values of the anointing can only come to people who realise, in all these ways, spiritually, their need of this Servant of the Lord, working, under the anointing, for their good, for their advantage.

THE NEW TESTAMENT COUNTERPART

We now follow the same course as we have followed in every connection. This part of Isaiah's prophecies, and this chapter in particular, carries us to the New Testament counterpart. We have seen that there are parts of the New Testament which answer distinctly and clearly to the different phases and movements in these prophecies of Isaiah. And the New Testament counterpart of this sixty-first chapter is undoubtedly Paul's Letter to the Galatians. Let us look at a few fragments from that letter. You will see how they bring in Isaiah lxi, the anointing of the Spirit.

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

"This only would I learn from you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now perfected in the flesh? . . . He therefore that supplieth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? . . . Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law . . . that upon the Gentiles might come the blessing of Abraham in Christ Jesus; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Gal. iii. 2, 5, 13, 14).

"And because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (iv. 6).

"For we through the Spirit by faith wait for the hope of righteousness" (v. 5).

"But I say, Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other; that ye

may not do the things that ye would. But if ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law . . . If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk" (v. 16 - 18, 25).

"For he that soweth unto his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life" (vi. 8).

All that, as you notice, has to do with the Spirit—which is, of course, another way of speaking of the anointing. We will now take another brief series, which follows the line of the Cross.

"I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me . . ." (ii. 20).

"O foolish Galatians, who did bewitch you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was openly set forth crucified?" (iii. 1).

"And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof" (v. 24).

"But far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (vi. 14).

These two series of extracts from this brief letter "to the churches in Galatia" (i. 2) make it clear that two of its major themes are the Cross and the Holy Spirit. It is the bridge that is passed over between Isaiah liii and Isaiah lxi.

THE ESSENTIALLY SPIRITUAL NATURE OF CHRISTIANITY

Now we all know that this Letter to the Galatians contains Paul's tremendous battle. Yes, Paul was out for a fight when he set himself to write this document. There is no more vehement product of the pen of Paul than that which we have in this letter. But what is the battle over? what is it all about? Of course there are theological and doctrinal answers to that question; but it may be said, with a good deal of support both from the letter itself and from other parts of the New Testament, that this battle of Paul's all related to the essentially spiritual character of Christianity. The Christianity which is the true Christianity is an essentially spiritual thing. That is what the battle is about. It shows so clearly, in every connection, that the Cross leads to a spiritual position, to a spiritual condition.

The great enemy, who had very useful instruments in the Judaizers, was fighting to make of Christianity something other than a spiritual thing; to bring it on to another than spiritual basis. Both

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then, and ever since, he has sought, either to resolve Christianity into a matter of rites and ceremonies—ritual, formalism, earthly and temporal symbols, representations, figures, and so forth; or, failing that, to substitute for it the false spirituality sometimes dignified by the name of 'mysticism'. That was Satan's object, and Paul saw that the issue was nothing less than the *real meaning*, the *essential nature*, of Christianity—what it is. And Paul was not giving it away, because he had had a tremendous experience on this very matter. He therefore set himself to fight this thing with all the strength at his command, to make it perfectly clear that Christianity is not in any respect an earthly system—it is a heavenly life. Christianity is essentially a life in the Spirit, and the Cross is intended to produce that. If it does not produce it, there is some reason for it in those concerned. It means that the whole nature of Christianity has been changed, and the meaning of the Cross subverted.

So Paul lunges at this subtle move of the enemy with all the force of the Cross, and brings in every weapon to which he can lay his hand. What are some of those weapons?

PAUL'S WEAPONS AGAINST THE DEBASING OF CHRISTIANITY

(i) HIS PERSONAL HISTORY

Well, first of all—and this is a very powerful weapon, as you will notice from this letter—he brings in the weapon of his own history and his own experience. There are few places in all his writings—perhaps only Second Corinthians—where he refers to himself more than he does in this letter. He brings his own history and his own experience right forward; it is one of his master-strokes. And he was the man to do it! Just look at Saul of Tarsus: look at his history—what he tells us about himself. Was there ever a man who had put this whole Jewish system more thoroughly to the test than he had? He had committed himself to the observances, to the performance of every part of the Jewish ritual, right up to the hilt; indeed, he tells us that he was far more zealous in this matter than many of his own age. "I advanced in the Jews' religion beyond many of mine own age . . . being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers" (Gal. i. 14). This man had gone all the way with this system, with its ceremonies and rites, its types and figures, its symbols and forms; he had gone the whole way.

What did it do for him? Where did it land him? He had exhausted it most thoroughly, most conscientiously, most sincerely: because one thing

that we have to say about Saul of Tarsus is that he was a man who did not believe in half measures—he was a man who meant business, and he was a man who was sincere in what he did. He tells us: "I verily thought . . . that I ought to do"—"I thought that I *ought* to do"—"many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts xxvi. 9). It was a matter of conscience with this brilliant young Pharisee, who had climbed so high on the ladder of Judaism. But, where did it land him? We have his own exclamation; he says: 'This is where it landed me!'—"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" (Rom. vii. 24). You could not get very much lower than that, could you? That is the last word in anything. In his own experience, in his own history, the whole thing had failed. In effect, he says: 'That is where it landed me; that is all it did for me. And it is not going to do anything better for anybody else, however devoted they may be to it.'

(ii) THE MEANING OF THE CROSS

But then, having come to that end, to that ignominious end, crying for deliverance—"O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me? Nothing and nobody, over all this long history, has proved a deliverer for me!"—then he found the Lord Jesus; and the Lord Jesus did for him all that this tremendous sum of things had entirely failed to do. He found the Cross, and he said: "I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20). You notice the change from the thought of 'death' to the thought of 'life'. He is a dead man made alive, come to life. He is a man who has known an altogether new beginning, a new history, a new experience, which has sprung out of the Cross of the Lord Jesus.

Moreover, he found the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit did for him what this vast system of Judaism, to which he had given himself so utterly, could never do. That is why he gives such a large place to the Holy Spirit in this letter. That is why the Cross and the Holy Spirit are here brought together as the ruling lines of this whole testimony. The Holy Spirit, on the ground of the Cross, has reversed the whole experience, changed the whole situation.

(iii) THE MEANING OF CHRIST

And then—here we could go through the letter with another ruling line—he discovered the real meaning of Christ. The name of Christ occurs forty-three times in this little letter, which can be

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read in ten minutes or a quarter of an hour. That itself is significant; indeed, it just shouts at us as to what it is all about. Paul is really seeking to show here what is the true meaning of Christ. What is the true meaning of Christ? Just this: that all that system has been—in Himself—completely fulfilled. The vast system of the law and all its ordinances has been fulfilled in and by Christ, in the Cross; all righteousness has been fulfilled. As He came to His baptism in the Jordan, typifying His death on the Cross, Jesus had said: "Suffer it now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness" (Matt. iii. 15). That was the question at issue, and it was all fulfilled in the Cross of the Lord Jesus; Christ crucified has fulfilled it all. The Old Testament is fulfilled in Christ. That is what we have been saying about Isaiah; and what is true of Isaiah is true of all the Old Testament. We cannot attempt to show here how the Old Testament is fulfilled in Christ, but that is what Paul is saying. 'I have been crucified with Christ: and so I am united with Him in that writing off, that fulfilment, of all the requirements of God; and, by the Spirit, I come into the good of all that Jesus is.'

(IV) THE MEANING OF GRACE

There is yet another theme in this letter which would repay our study: it is the meaning of grace. That is a great thing in the Letter to the Galatians. Grace puts us on to an entirely new basis. All the ritual, all the forms, all the demands of the law, only served to accentuate the evil conscience. Paul makes that so clear. As we know, this Letter to the Galatians was written before the Letter to the Romans: probably Paul, when he had written to the Galatians, said to himself, 'I must write something more about this', and so took the opportunity of enlarging upon it when writing to the Romans. But the point is that the whole thing related to this matter of *conscience*. "I had not known sin . . . except the law had said, Thou shalt not . . ." (Rom. vii. 7). 'The very saying of that thing only gave me a bad conscience: this whole system was only keeping my conscience alive—it was not saving me from an evil conscience. But grace has done that; grace has put me on to an altogether new and different basis, where the evil conscience is dealt with.' Yes, grace deals with the conscience. It is a wonderful word over against a bad conscience: 'The Grace of God'.

(V) THE MEANING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Lastly, Paul discovered the meaning of the Holy Spirit. What does Paul say preeminently about the Holy Spirit here? "Because ye are sons, God sent

forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. iv. 6). "Ye received the Spirit of sonship, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom. viii. 15). Paul sets that over against servanthood. And there he gets right to the heart of the matter. For if we recognise, as it is easy to do, the difference between a servant and a son, we have the secret of everything.

A servant is one who simply has to do what he is told: he is told that he must or he must not, and, whether he likes it or not, whether he agrees with it or not, it is for him to obey, that is all. Whatever may be his own reactions, he cannot help himself: he is merely a servant. Inwardly he may be in positive revolt against the whole thing, but he can do nothing about it. I am speaking, of course, about a servant of those days. A servant of the present day would just give up his job and go—that is how it is in our time. But you could not do it there in the Roman Empire in Paul's day. A bondslave had no power of choice whatever; he could not say: 'I am resigning; I am going to find another master'—he just could not do it. He was bought, body, soul and spirit; and, though he might be in revolt with every fibre of his being, there was nothing he could do about it. He just was the bond-slave of this law.

THE SPIRIT OF SONSHIP

That is a servant, a slave. What is a son? Well, if he is a son in the true meaning of Christian sonship, his service is a delight to him. There is in him the dynamic of love: he delights to do those things that please his Father, and that love gives him the incentive and the power to do them. He has another spirit, the Spirit of Sonship, working in him, making it possible for him to respond to every requirement: for that is the meaning of the Holy Spirit—an inward power, and that of love, which makes everything possible. As we all know, if we have a mighty love for something, nothing is impossible! Would that we had more of this love—the love that does not irk, that does not wait to have things pointed out, to have its attention drawn to them, but is all the time on the alert, anxious and keen, watching to see what needs to be done. We need that spirit, do we not?

That is something that is so impressive in certain companies known to us in the Far East. It is referred to here by way of illustration and example, not by way of condemnation or criticism of others. One great meeting hall, for instance, with its internal capacity of 1,600, and provision all the way round for up to 3,000 more, and with its 1,000 panes of glass, needs, as you can guess, a lot of looking

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after—what with the cleaning, the care of all the electrical installations, the amplifiers, and so on. There is so much connected with even one centre like that. After every meeting you see an army of men and women, prepared, and getting down to it, sweeping and cleaning and mopping up, adjusting and seeing to things, so that everything is clean and wholesome and in its place, for the next meeting. As you look at these people doing these jobs, perhaps you ask about someone, busily working away in his old clothes: 'Who is that brother?' 'Oh, that is Major-General So-and-So!' You see another younger man getting down to it, really getting down to a dirty job: 'Who is that young brother?' 'He is the Managing Director of the biggest textile factory on this island!' And so you go on—General, Colonel, Director—but they are all 'going to it'. One of these high officers has made it his business to clean those one-thousand panes of glass once every week!

How do they go about it? Well, before they start on their work, they all meet together and pray and sing. They pray all together, this great army of workers; then they have a good sing; and then they get down to the work. It is all done in a spirit of joy like that. That is the spirit of sonship! That is not bondslavery; it is the true spirit of sonship. We need far more of that. That is the meaning of the Holy Spirit. You are not surprised that these people are radiant, and you are not surprised that the question is answered in their case: "To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" It is indeed revealed there. Suffer the illustration; it is very wholesome to have seen these things really working. They can work; they really can work.

This, then, is the meaning of the Spirit, the meaning of Christ: the real spirit of sonship. That is what Paul is saying here. Satan is against that—Satan just hates that. He will try to break it up; he will try to spoil it, at all costs. That was the battle that Paul was in. He was not just contending with the Judaizers, but with the direct antagonism of the great enemy against a testimony of that kind—against the real fruit of the Cross.

FREEDOM FROM LAW MEANS GOVERNMENT BY THE SPIRIT

Now, if Satan is thwarted along one line, he does not give up—he tries another. Satan is a great master of strategy, and one of his favourite lines is that of pushing things to extremes. Among the Galatian believers, he had sought to push legalism to an extreme. But now he is thwarted along that line; Paul wins the battle—there is no doubt about it. What is the enemy's next line of attack? 'Very

well then', he says, 'if you won't have the law, then don't have any law; discard all law. "You are no longer under law, you are under grace"—you can do as you like! Just behave as you like; just carry on as you like; you must know no limitations, no restrictions. Any kind of restriction is law—repudiate it! Go to the other extreme—licence instead of law!' I believe that, if Paul were alive to-day, he would be just as vehement against this as he was against the other: for here is a work of Satan indeed. If Satan cannot bind by the law, and change the whole nature of things in that way, he will seek to dismiss all law and make us wholly lawless.

But remember, if this Letter to the Galatians is the letter of the liberty of the Spirit, it is also the letter of the government of the Spirit. We are only free when we are governed. In George Matheson's well-known words, that we sometimes sing:

'Make me a captive, Lord,
And then I shall be free'.

A paradox—but how true. We are not free when we are giving way to licence, when we take liberty that far. No: this Letter, and the Letters to the Romans and to the Hebrews, are not documents of lawlessness. Even if they do set aside the whole of the Jewish system, they do not introduce a régime of lawlessness. But they do most clearly bring in the life and government of the Holy Spirit. Remember—no child of God who is governed by the Holy Spirit, who is really living a life in the Spirit, will infringe any Divine principle. Indeed, a life governed by the Holy Spirit will be the more meticulously careful about spiritual principles.

NO CHANGE IN DIVINE PRINCIPLES

You see, the change is not in the law; that is where a great mistake has been made. Christ crucified does not alter the law; Christ Himself does not alter the law; the Holy Spirit does not alter the law. The change is not in the law—the change is in the man. Grace does not say that, because you are not under the law, you may now murder, and get away with it; that you can steal now, you are not under law; you can commit adultery now, you are not under law; you can be covetous now, you are not under law. Grace does not say that; you are horrified at the suggestion.

But carry that right through to anything and everything of Divine principle—and remember that the Law of Moses is only the embodiment of Divine principles. Now the Lord Jesus took up

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that and said: 'Moses said, Thou shalt not kill; I say to you that if you are angry with your brother, you are not less in danger of judgment' (Matt. v. 21, 22). The Apostle John goes further, and says that if you hate your brother you are a murderer: if you hate him, without taking any step to kill him, you are already a murderer in your heart (I John iii. 15). Take the words of the Lord Jesus again: 'Moses said, Thou shalt not commit adultery; I say to you, you have only so much as to look with evil intent, and you have broken the commandment' (Matt. v. 27, 28). It is the principle of the thing, you see. This is terribly searching.

No, neither Christ, nor the Holy Spirit, nor the Cross, changes the nature of the law, the principle of the law—it is the man who is changed. That is how the law becomes lifted from us, because we become changed people. The Spirit, who keeps the law, has now entered into us, and if we walk by the Spirit, in the Spirit, we do not fulfil the lusts of the flesh (Gal. v. 16, 25). It is a question of the changed person.

TO WALK BY THE SPIRIT IS TO KEEP THE LAW

So grace does not say: 'You are not under the law, therefore you need not observe the Sabbath.' We have to recognise that the Sabbath is the embodiment of a principle: it is not a day—it is a principle. It is a principle upon which God has constituted the creation, in every realm, that there must be a period of rest for something new. In all nature there has to be a period of rest, in order to prepare for something new. In our bodies there has to be a period of rest in order that there may be something new. In spiritual matters, in spiritual service, there have to be periods of rest, during which the Lord can speak and give us something

new—that is the principle of the Sabbath. But even there, the Lord has very graciously made it possible for many to have a day a week still, in which to let other things go, to keep it sacred for the Lord, for spiritual renewal.

So, you see, it is the principle that matters, not the outward form. Nothing changes the principle. The principles of all Divine laws are abiding: they are never abrogated, never set aside, never nullified—they still hold good. Jesus went behind the code, and put His finger on the principle of every part of it; and He said: You may not now be governed and ruled by an outward system of 'Thou shalt' and 'Thou shalt not'; you are to be ruled by the Holy Spirit who observes those things. The Spirit is the Spirit of *holiness*: no one who lives in the Spirit, therefore, will persistently, habitually, do unholy things, be unholy. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of *love*: no one who lives in the Spirit will have any other than the Spirit of love, will fail to observe the laws of love, will violate love. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of *truth*: no one who lives in and by the Spirit will be untruthful, in any sense—and untruthfulness covers not only the saying of things that are not true, but everything in the life that is not absolutely true and real and genuine and honest and transparent. The man or the woman who lives in the Spirit will be a man or a woman of truth, one who is real. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of *wisdom*, and those who live in the Spirit will have a Divine wisdom governing their lives.

It is life in the Spirit, through the Cross, that is here in view; and it is the crucified man, the crucified woman—or the assembly or the church—who walk and live in the Spirit to whom the Arm of the Lord is revealed. Do we want to know the power of God—God with us, God for us? Then it must be like this—the Cross our ground, the Spirit our life, walking and living as sons of God.

T. A-S.

"THESE MY BRETHREN"

"I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee" (Psalm xxii. 22).

"A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity" (Proverbs xvii. 17).

"And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me" (Matthew xxv. 40).

"And Ananias departed, and entered into the

house; and laying his hands on him said, Brother Saul . . ." (Acts ix. 17).

"For both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Hebrews ii. 11).

WE are both humbled and inspired to know that the Lord Jesus is not ashamed to call us His brethren. Often the words seem to come to us as a challenge: He is not ashamed of us, but are we

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ashamed of Him? By all means let us face up to the challenge, but we must not allow the Accuser to use it for our condemnation. Most of us are truly not ashamed of the Lord. If it became a matter of declaring our allegiance, we would not hesitate, by His grace, to do so. If we were in other lands where people said, 'My god is So-and-So', we would not hesitate to reply, 'And my God is the Lord Jesus'. In a land like ours it is not always right or seemly for us to be treating the matter in this way; so, while we must not excuse ourselves for cowardice, we must not accept a burden of false condemnation because we do not buttonhole everybody and make them listen to what we have to say about the Lord. Nevertheless our hearts should be filled with constant wonder that He not only loves us but claims us as His brethren.

But if we must avoid condemnation, we must also beware of conceit. We are nothing to be proud of! The Lord finds no grounds of satisfaction in us that He should claim this kinship, and we would be wrong indeed if we imagined that there was nothing in us of which to be ashamed. No, this determination of His has nothing to do with our merits. It is rather a declaration of His own faithfulness. He wants it to be understood that at all costs He is going to be a Brother to us. He will not repudiate us; He will not cast us off; He will not let us down. He claims us as those who have been given to Him by the Father.

REASONS FOR THE RELATIONSHIP

In this passage in Hebrews two reasons are given us for this emphasis on spiritual brotherhood. It is due, firstly, to a common origin. "For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified have all one origin" (R.S.V.). There is, of course, an emphasis on the essential humanity of the Lord Jesus; on the wonderful fact, too little understood, that the Eternal Son is now for ever Man, and, as such, capable of being a veritable Brother to us men. But the clear stress here is on the wonderful act of grace whereby we have become "partakers of the divine nature" (II Peter i. 4): we have been brought into the family of God, and, by new birth, have the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ as our Father. This brotherhood is the result of a mighty miracle. It is no human idea. It is not just a casual, superficial matter of praying 'Our Father'. It had its birth in the heart of the Father, in the burning eternal quest of God to realise His own fulness in a family of sons. This is why the Lord Jesus is not ashamed to call us brethren: it is for the Father's

sake. The whole idea takes us back to eternal longings and counsels; it is associated with that which is infinitely precious. It takes us back to the Cross, where the Eternal Son travailed that we also might be born of God. This is no little side-issue; it goes deep to the very heart of redemption.

We not only have a common origin with Christ; we also have a common destiny. "In bringing many sons unto glory" (Heb. ii. 10). Although there may be much cause for shame in us personally, there is nothing to be ashamed about in the objective to which we are moving; for that is to be the very reverse of shame—namely, glory. When this end is finally realised, the Father Himself will be proud. He will be satisfied, and all the universe will thrill with the glory of it. Shame is a mean thing, and there is nothing mean about the Divine goal of our salvation, which involves miserable sinners being transformed into the true likeness of God's glorious Son.

Let us note that there are to be *many* sons. There is always the danger that we, unlike our Lord, will become ashamed of those who are our brethren. When we begin to appreciate the magnitude of God's eternal purpose in His Son, and become aware of the very high spiritual end in view, we may find ourselves constantly reducing the number of those who can reach that objective until we make it an exceedingly exclusive circle. We may even be in danger of giving the impression that we think we are the only ones. This cannot be correct, for the Word distinctly states that there are "*many* sons" of whom He is not ashamed. Not that we must grow careless, or take too much for granted: even a simple reading of this letter makes it very clear that partnership with Christ has its conditions, and that none should presume that all who are born again will automatically realise the full purpose of their salvation. No, let us heed the warnings. But at the same time, let us yield to the inspiration of the upward calling. This is a big purpose that we are in: we must therefore seek grace ourselves to be bigger people, and, above all, to be more wholehearted in our committal to this great 'Brother' who is not ashamed to associate our destiny with His own.

CHARACTERISTICS OF BROTHERHOOD

The reminder that He is 'not ashamed to call us brethren' was given for a very practical purpose. This was not intended for pretty sentiment, but for the harsh realities of life. We are engaged in a great Divine enterprise, full of difficulties, and opposed by many enemies. How can we get

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through? The answer is that our Father has provided for us a great Helper, our Brother—and a Brother who will never relinquish the sacred task of seeing us through. So it may help us to consider what benefits come to us by virtue of this Divine ‘Brother’.

A BROTHERHOOD OF SACRIFICE

“A brother is born for adversity”. His love does not hesitate to pay the price; if the brother is in need, then he gladly sacrifices in order to bring him help. One of our references is taken from Psalm xxii, the first part of which describes in detail the agonies of Calvary. The Lord Jesus could have no message for His brethren—indeed there could be no brethren—if He had not first laid down His life in willing sacrifice. These sufferings were not for His own advancement; they would have had no meaning, they could not have happened, if He had not undertaken to deliver us from our sins. All this He endured for our sakes. And then, immediately the pains were past, with the tomb opened and the Lord brought out on to resurrection ground, He confessed us as His brethren. Psalm xxii changes in the middle, after which the sufferings are finished, and the blessed ‘afterwards’ of glory is realised. The turning point is found in this very verse, which speaks of His ministry to His brethren. He now has a message for His brethren, a testimony for His brethren, a leadership of praise in the midst of His brotherhood—all because He has paid the price of brotherhood. There is always a costly price to be paid; “a brother is born for adversity”. It was with these “many sons” in view that He first undertook to bear the Cross; it was doubtless the anticipation of the happy day of deliverance when He would lead the praises of this host of brethren which enabled Him to endure the bitter pain of it all. He felt that it was worth it. The fruit of His sufferings would be a holy band of brothers.

In some measure this should be true of us all. There is a great sacrifice to be made if we enter this realm—“we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (I John iii. 16). One of the wonders of the New Testament is that it adopted Greek words which had quite unworthy meanings, and put pure worth into those very words. The unhappy feature of our own day is that beautiful words have been dragged down into the foulest mire. We have to be careful how we use the word ‘love’. Thank God, though, that ‘brotherly love’ still means something. It denotes a love which is unselfish, which expects only to give and not to

get; which does not indulge in a lot of empty sentiment, but, in an honest, practical manner, cares for the other simply because he is a brother—because both are sons of the same Father.

This seems to be one of the implications of the Lord’s parable of the sheep and the goats. He takes great account of our behaviour towards what He calls “one of these my brethren, even these least”. The ‘least’ are not necessarily the smallest or most insignificant—these may attract our natural sympathies—but perhaps the ones who have least interest to us or who are least likely to provide us with any recompense. Although the deeds described were not heroic ones, they nevertheless demanded something of a sacrificial spirit on the part of those who did them. What a surprise for them to discover that the Lord treasured those acts of ‘brotherly love’ as though done personally to Himself. It may not be so difficult for us to care for the Lord’s great servants. What is much more rare, and to Him much more praiseworthy, is the sacrificial service done without any thought of recompense or reward to “these least”. It is a solemn thought that the way in which we treat our brethren is in fact the way in which we are treating Him—their ‘Brother’.

No partiality is allowed in this sacrificial exercise of brotherly love. When Ananias went to visit Saul of Tarsus, it was not because he desired to have him as a brother; indeed, he might quite truly have confessed that this was one of the last men in the world whom he would have chosen. From his side, Saul also could truthfully have acknowledged that his previous attitude towards such as Ananias had been anything but brotherly. See, then, what grace has done! The one lays the hands of association and identification upon the other, and greets him as “Brother Saul”. To Ananias it was clearly a costly action. He little knew that it would make his name honoured among believers throughout the world as the first one to acknowledge Saul as a brother. As events developed, and Paul became a great spiritual figure in the Church of his day, Ananias must have been unspeakably grateful that he was given grace to take this step. He had every reason not to be ashamed at calling Saul of Tarsus ‘brother’. But at the time, it called for real sacrifice. Brotherliness always does.

“Behold, how good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity” (Psalm cxxxiii. 1). Indeed it is; but it is also costly. That “precious ointment” flowing down may speak of the fragrance of Christ, but it also speaks of the sufferings of the Cross. This is how brethren dwell

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together in unity ; this is the secret of their brotherhood: they share the Spirit of the Crucified, and lay down their lives, not only for the Lord, but for one another. This brotherhood is a brotherhood of sacrifice, in the fellowship of the One by whose unique and supreme sacrifice it was brought into being.

A BROTHERHOOD OF SYMPATHY

Christ is a Brother to us because He provides us with a special depth of heart sympathy. Hebrews ii has quite a deal to say on this very point. Sympathy, of course, means more than suffering for people ; it means suffering *with* them. On the Cross the Lord Jesus suffered *for* us, bearing pains which we shall never know nor have to face. But all His life was full of sufferings, the sufferings by which He qualified to become a true 'Brother', by enduring all the trials and temptations which we have to bear.

Job had three friends, but he had no brother. The three doubtless tried to be helpful, but, in actual fact, they had no sympathy for Job. They reasoned, explained, argued and criticized, but they did not and could not sympathize. They did not know what God was doing, so it was foolish of them to try to correct Job and load him with useless advice which was no help at all. Their wisdom would have consisted in quiet comradeship, in the understanding look and the sympathetic gesture which would assure him that he had spiritual support in his trial. They had no real sympathy for him. How could they have, when they had never endured the kind of trial which he was experiencing? Poor Job badly needed a brother to stand by him and help him through.

We, too, need such a brother, and in Christ we have Him. He can sympathize, because He has passed through all the problems and difficulties which we have to face. Unlike Job's friends, He does know what the Father is doing with us, and why the enemy is allowed to try us. He knows, but often He does not explain. It is not the time for explanations, but for brotherly comradeship, the time for kindly support from the 'Brother' who has been through the sanctifying process Himself, learning obedience by the things which He suffered, and who will lend a hand to see us through. He is ever near to keep us steady while the fires and floods of affliction are doing their sanctifying work. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee" (Isaiah xliii. 2). He does not despise us. His love is more than condescending pity. He is a true Brother to us, and will not despair of us, nor disown us.

What a need there is among the saints for such a ministry of brotherly sympathy! Too often we treat one another with the supercilious criticism which Job got from his friends. Like them, we are far too lavish with our advice, far too ready to condemn ; we are prone, like them, to adulterate Divine truth with harsh or malicious judgments of our own. The suffering people of God need brotherly comfort. In some cases—though not always—they may have brought trouble on themselves. In other cases, like Job, they may not have done this, and yet they betray an undisciplined spirit which certainly needs the refining fires. Sometimes their trials are direct Satanic assaults. But in any case, it is not so much advice that they need as brotherly sympathy. Our counsels may do more harm than good. Our prayerful strength will be a truly Christlike contribution to the work of bringing them to glory. The Church should be a brotherhood of sympathy.

A BROTHERHOOD OF STRENGTH

The third feature of Christ's brotherly aid is its strength. Sympathy, but sympathy with strength. In natural relationships we do not expect a brother to be soft or sentimental. Other people's love may be of this kind, but not a brother's. His love is different, perhaps a bit more robust or even tough, but nevertheless thoroughly reliable. We must not expect the help given by the Lord Jesus to His brethren to be mere soothing of our feelings or easing of our way. His work is the work of sanctifying ; His great aim, the production in us of the true family likeness. He is determined to make us His brethren, not just in nominal or legal relationship, but in conformity to His own image.

He will not lower the Divine standard. This would be a false love and a treacherous sympathy. As our 'Brother' He will be strong to insist that we go right through with the costly experience of doing the Father's will. Sometimes His very strength may to us seem harsh. We would rather He accepted some lesser standard, some cheaper way. In His case, the Father's love did not spare Him ; it could not, for the issues at stake were too important. And now, with the outworking of those very same issues in our own lives, we must not expect that His love will spare us. This Brother gives His aid, not that we may seek to be spared, but that we may endure.

We shall not truly help our brothers in Christ if we lower the standard, and content ourselves with something less than the full will of God. That is not the sympathy which our fellow-believers

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need—the false love which is only concerned with making things smooth and easy. To be a true ‘Brother’ to us, our Lord Jesus first took the path of absolute obedience Himself. “For their sakes”, He said, “For their sakes I sanctify myself; that they also may be sanctified” (John xvii. 19). Our experiences are not ours alone, but have a meaning for our brethren. Our testimony matters. It matters far more than we think. If we realise this, we shall seek grace, not to be crying out to the Father to spare us, but to have our eyes on the will of God in the midst of all our suffering, aware that we are called to be a support and an inspiration to our brethren when they too pass this way. For our sakes, as well as for His own, the Lord Jesus dare not be weak. He must be strong to do the will of the Father, and so be a cause of strength to His needy brethren.

He is a partner to us in our great enterprise of faith. The following verse reads thus in the Conybeare and Howson version: “And again, I will put my trust in him, even I and the children which God has given me” (Heb. ii. 13). This is all in keeping with the stress on His brotherly aid. He certainly showed a perfect personal faith in the Father. Here, though, He draws us into this faith of His, partnering us in it, and inspiring us to share His absolute

confidence in the Father. This brotherhood is a brotherhood of faith—His faith—and with Him we can go through together, trusting only and always in God.

This conception of the life of faith lifts us right out of ourselves. It reminds us that in a small way we, too, are called upon to be partners in faith to our brethren, to strengthen them and encourage them, so that we may trust God together, and trust Him right through to the end. In Hebrews xii great emphasis is laid on this need for faith while we are enduring the chastening which comes to sons: for this we must keep our eyes on the Lord Jesus, believing that He will see us through to the great Divine end of partaking of God’s holiness. But this is no mere personal matter. “Wherefore lift up the hands that hang down . . .” (Heb. xii. 12). As we learn to trust, we are to bring strength to our weaker brethren. The Father is seeking to bring many sons to glory. For this purpose He has provided the strengthening help of our great ‘Brother’, who has become a partner of our faith. Let us thank God for Him. But let us also, in our turn, seek grace to be brothers, to see one another through to the glorious end in view. In the last analysis, this brotherhood is a brotherhood of faith.

H. F.

“BECAUSE HE SAW HIS GLORY”

III. ‘WOE!’—‘LO!’—‘GO!’

Reading: Isaiah vi. 1-5; John xii. 41; Isaiah vi. 6-14.

“These things said Isaiah, because he saw his glory; and he spake of him.”

John was referring to the Lord Jesus—Jehovah of Hosts!

WE have seen that what took place at the time of Isaiah’s vision was related to the entirely new order of things into which we have come. It was the end of an earth-centred system, the end of the earthly seat of Divine government and priesthood; and the introduction of the heavenly and the true, the abiding, the eternal. It was not only a vision of the pre-incarnate glory of the Lord Jesus, but it was a prophetic forecast of the new order, the new economy—what we call the new dispensation. He, our Lord, would be exalted far above all rule and authority: the seat and centre of government would be—as it now is—in Heaven with Him; the priesthood is continued by Him; the house is now

a heavenly house. That came in, in its beginnings, with this vision.

We have spoken of the tremendous things that happened in that eighth century before Christ. Now we are in the time of that vision’s real fulfilment. That vision is, or should be, the vision of the Church, the people of God, now; and in the light of that vision the Church ought to be fulfilling its ministry, as did Isaiah. Because Isaiah, as we have pointed out and stressed, is not just a historic figure or a representative of a certain period in this world’s history: he is a representation and embodiment of a permanent, Divine function, in relation to bringing the people of God to God’s thought and fulness in Christ. And that function is as much here now as it was in the days of Isaiah: the function of the prophetic ministry remains. There may not be a people whom we to-day call ‘prophets’, in the Old Testament sense, but the function of the Holy Spirit is being carried on in this dispensation: the function that seeks all the time to keep in view

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God's full end and purpose before the people of God, and to bring them into that purpose.

If we are a part of the Lord's people, then these two things apply to us: first, the vision of the exalted Lord; and second, the ministry that issues therefrom. These two things belong to *us*. Whether we are in the good of them or not may be another matter. But that is why these messages are being given: it is the Lord's occasion for telling us about it—what we ought to see, and what we ought to do.

For brevity's sake, I am going to gather all this up into three little words:

Verse 5: "Then said I, *Woe . . . !*"

Verse 7: "He touched my mouth with it, and said, *Lo . . .*"

"And he said, *Go . . .*"

'Woe!', 'Lo!' and 'Go!' That sums it all up; everything is gathered into that.

Let me say at once that what we are speaking of relates to fellowship with God in His purpose. This is not a message to unsaved people: this is a message to the Church, a message to the people of God; and it has to do pre-eminently, fundamentally, with fellowship with God *in His purpose*.

'WOE!'

"Then said I, *Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips . . .*"

Isaiah was not what we would now call an 'unsaved' man. He was a chosen servant of God, and, as we now know, a very, very valuable servant of God. And, seeing that this vision was given to him, and all this happened in his experience, as a servant of God, it quite strongly says that these are the things which go to constitute such a ministry—a ministry in fellowship with God concerning His purpose. Yes, and—one says it deliberately—a part of the very foundation of such a ministry, of the very preparation of such a vessel, is this word, 'Woe!' The sinner not knowing the Lord, coming under conviction of sin, might utter that word. It ought, indeed, to be the very first word of a sinner coming to the Lord. But here it is the word, the expression, of a prophet, the exclamation of a chosen servant of God.

Now, remember that the man himself was in this condition before he cried, 'Woe!', and had probably been in it for a long time. Things around him, too, as you will see, were in a pretty bad state, and had been like this for a long time, and he was involved in them. Yet it seems that he had not been

stung into the realisation of his own state, and of the real state of things around him. No doubt he had deplored it, no doubt he had felt bad about many things; no doubt he had grieved over the evident declension; but it would seem that not until this moment did he become fully alive to his own condition and the condition around him. What was it that did it?

You know, it is quite possible for us to have much to say about the evils and the wrongs in the world around us, to be quite prepared to admit that we ourselves are anything but perfect, that there is indeed much that is not right about us, without that being an adequate basis for our serving God in this sense—that is, concerning His full purpose. The full purpose of God requires something deeper than that. And so it had to be brought home to the prophet. And what was it that did it?

Well, of course, he 'saw the Lord'. And he heard: "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts". And when he really came into touch with the Lord, in this vital way, the first effect was a realisation of the awful state of his own heart, and of the nation around him. And we shall not be of much use to the Lord unless that double sense is with us in an overwhelming way. We must come into touch with the Lord.

Now, we have been talking about 'vision', but let us for the moment forget that word. It is a word that, for most people, conjures up all sorts of things, and might provoke such questions as: 'What do you mean by a vision of the Lord? I have never had such a vision. Am I to have a vision of the Lord? Are you expecting *me* to have a vision of the Lord? Do you expect something like this to happen to *me*?' Instead of speaking of 'vision', let us simply speak of 'coming, in a living way, into touch with the Lord.'

For after all, that is what it amounts to, and that can happen without any objective visions. A real touch with the Lord will inevitably result in this. It is the declaration of a fact, and it is also a test of our relationship to the Lord. Those who really are in touch with God, those who really have this living relatedness with Him, those who really walk near to Him, are the people who carry with them this—not temporary, desultory, occasional ejaculation, but—abiding consciousness of the *woe* of their own state—put that in many ways—their utter worthlessness! "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. vii. 18). Any complacency, self-satisfaction, insensitiveness to sin; any absence of an agony and an anguish over evil, means distance from God. The further you get away from God, the less are you troubled by the

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sense of sin. The nearer you get to God, the more acute becomes this consciousness. And if He draws near, if the Lord comes into any place or any life, this is the thing that happens.

Now look! 'This One', said John, 'this One whom Isaiah saw, sitting on a throne, high and lifted up—this One was the Lord Jesus; and He came down from that throne. This One, this same One, is "Holy, holy, holy"; it is this very One.' Oh, is it not overwhelming that the One about whom the seraphim were crying 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts'—that that One was Jesus! But if He left His throne in glory, if He has come out of Heaven to this world, He has not left behind His holiness. Look! He is here, and His very presence has the effect of creating a spontaneous outburst. His enemies—they cannot remain quiescent; the evil powers—they cannot remain silent; sinners—they come to His feet. His presence, without His saying anything, means that men begin to make confessions. Sincere, honest people begin to seek Him. Sinners, stricken with the consciousness of sin, say: 'Depart from me—I am a sinful man, O Lord!' The evil people cannot bear this presence; they cannot endure the presence of His holiness. The presence of God is like that!

Look again! Here is Saul of Tarsus, the Pharisee: 'as concerning the righteousness which is of the law, found blameless' (Phil. iii. 6). That, he tells us, was the verdict of his contemporaries. Not much room for consciousness of sin there, is there? On his way to Damascus he meets Jesus Christ; he sees the Lord high and lifted up. What does he say? The erstwhile self-congratulating, righteous Pharisee writes to Timothy: "... sinners; of whom I am chief" (I Tim. i. 15). He has seen the Lord, and that is the effect.

Job, all through those long chapters of the book which goes by his name, is trying to justify himself, and his friends are saying so: 'Job is all the time trying to justify himself—to put himself right with God and man.' It is a long and terrible story, until the Lord meets him. When his friends at last are silent, the Lord comes in and says: "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man: . . . declare thou unto me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? . . ." (xxxviii. 2-4). And so on. He meets the Lord. What is the end? "I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee, *wherefore* I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (xli. 5, 6). He has seen the Lord, he has met the Lord, he has been in the presence of the Lord.

We have quoted Peter. Peter was a very self-assured, self-confident sort of fellow. But one day, in the presence of the Lord Jesus, something of that majesty broke in upon him, and he cried: "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke v. 8). It is just that; it is a real test. A life that is really in touch with God can have no pride, no conceit, no arrogance, no self-complacency; it cannot be hard and cruel toward people who are faulty and failing; it knows its own heart too well. That is essential in a ministry that is going to lead to spiritual fulness.

A simple little story is told of a girl who started a little class amongst slum children, poor little begrimed girls, ragged and dirty, who never knew much about soap and water. She gathered them together, and wondered how she could give them some sense of another kind of life. And so she brought along a beautiful, white lily; a large, white, perfect lily. They gathered round; she didn't say anything; she held it up in front of them; then she passed it round. 'Would you like to feel it? Would you like to look into it?' A grimy little girl, in all her mess and tatters, reached out a grubby hand to touch the lily; and as it got nearer the flower, she suddenly saw herself. She saw the contrast between the hand and the lily, and drew back. She rushed out of the meeting, ran home, sought out all the soap that she could find, washed herself, put on some cleaner clothes, did her hair, and came back. And not a word spoken!

That is only a very simple illustration. But a little touch with the real thing, a real touch with the Lord, should shock us, should really show us ourselves. The background and basis of any real spiritual value to the Lord is a sense of His holiness and the contrast between Him and ourselves. It must begin there; there can be no rushing in.

For I must remind you that Uzziah forced his way into the Holy Place, and took up the censer to offer incense unlawfully. Something that had no right to do so pressed into the presence of God, and God smote it. And the leprosy which broke out upon his countenance was only a symbol of what was in his heart. When Isaiah cried: "I am a man of unclean lips", do not forget that he had seen Uzziah, and had heard the leper calling: 'Unclean, unclean!' For it was a part of the law that all lepers must do that, to let everyone know; he had to pronounce his own uncleanness. It was that to which Isaiah was referring: "I am a man of unclean lips"—'I am really no better than Uzziah: I am a leper.'

That is the first phase: 'Woe! Woe! Woe! me!'

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‘LO!’

“*And he touched my mouth . . . and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and they sin purged.*”

There is a very great deal implied in this whole symbolic setting. One of the seraphim, on hearing this cry of woe, this confession of need and undone-ness, went to the altar—evidently the *great* altar—and, with tongs, took up a live coal, brought it over and touched the prophet’s lips. Remember that the lips are always the symbol of the heart, for it is out of the heart that we speak. He touched his lips with that *live* coal. It was not from the sacrifice of last week—that would have been dead coal; it was not even the sacrifice of yesterday—that would have been dead coal, too. Right up to the moment, the coal was still burning: evidently the sacrifice had just been offered, the altar was drenched with blood.

You have here three things: an altar, a burning coal, and (by implication) shed blood—everything that goes to make up the Cross of the Lord Jesus. It is not a little impressive that, in that scene in Heaven in the fifth chapter of the book of the Revelation, where the Lamb is seen in the midst of the throne, the literal statement is: ‘as though it had *just* been slain’ (v. 6). Right up to the moment, right up to date, this thing is still alive, it is still virtuous; it is eternally efficacious. It was an up-to-the-moment thing that happened. In the symbolism of the burning fire you have the Holy Spirit, operating on the virtue of the Blood and of the Cross of the Lord Jesus, creating the basis of this service. This kind of service, in relation to God’s full purpose, requires that all this shall be in the experience of a man or a woman, right up to date: a knowledge of the tremendous efficacy of the Blood of Jesus.

The real servant of God does not make light of the Blood. He makes a very great deal of the Blood, knowing that that Blood needs to be permanently efficacious for him. “The blood of Jesus”—you know the words of the text—“the blood of Jesus his Son *keeps on* cleansing us from all sin” (I John i. 7). The true servant of God, one who is related to His full purpose, rests upon the continuous, moment-by-moment, up-to-the-moment efficacy of the Blood of the Lamb, and upon the mighty power of the Holy Spirit, as fire. He rests, too, upon the separating work of the Cross. Remember that that word ‘holy’ (the seraphim cried: ‘Holy, holy . . .’) literally means ‘separate’. He is separate. The statement about Jesus is: “separated from sin-

ners” (Heb. vii. 26). The Cross is the place of the separation, the dividing; that is its meaning. And the separation is not only a separation from the world—it is our separation from ourselves.

It is, then, the *experience* of those mighty energies of the Blood, the Cross and the Spirit, on the part of the Lord’s people, of servants of God, that is foundational to true ministry. It is not the doctrine, the theory, the truth, objectively or mentally held. We may know all that the Bible has to say about the Blood, about altars, about the Cross, about the Holy Spirit, and yet the reality may not be a deeply applied thing in our being. And that is the tragedy of many a life, even of servants of God to-day. They may be able to give you all that the Bible has to say on these ‘subjects’, and yet it may mean nothing; it may be mere cleverness or interest. What God wants is men and women who have been *touched* in their inner being by the power of the Blood, by the power of the Spirit, by the separating work of the Cross.

‘GO!’

“*Then I said, Here am I; send me. And he said, Go . . .*”

Go! You never get that opportunity given by God Himself unless these other things are true. You may take up Christian work, but a Divine, ‘apostolic’ commissioning does rest upon these other two things. (Do not misunderstand my use of that word ‘apostolic’. I am only interpreting: it just means being ‘sent’. We all ought to be ‘sent ones’; the Church ought to be a sent body.) But thank God for His response to the prophet’s “Woe is me!” The seraph said, “Lo!” That was grace! A man like that, who is not exaggerating his condition—it was true, far more true than perhaps he realised, although he cried “Woe!”—a man like that could be visited in this way, and commissioned. Oh, mighty grace! If you had asked Isaiah in the ensuing years how he came to be God’s servant, he would say: ‘Just by the grace of God—that is all! If you knew what I came to know about myself, you would realise that this would never be the place for me, but for the grace of God! Marvellous grace!’

For, although it sounds so elementary and simple, it is nevertheless profoundly true, that anything that we are allowed to do in relation to the Lord and His purpose must bring to us an overwhelming sense of the grace of God. When we are young men and women, we are all ambitious to get into God’s work, to be preaching, speaking, and all that sort of thing. But as we go on, that kind of thing

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has a strange way of changing, and we come to the place where we say: 'God forbid that I should ever be on a platform, unless—unless—He puts me there. As long as I can keep off it I will; I will only be there because the Lord makes me get there. Because—who am I? Who am I, that I should talk to other people? What am I that I should seem to be standing before them?' That will grow as you walk with God. It is bound to be like that. It will be of the infinite grace of God that you will have any place at all in His purpose.

Here, He says: 'Go!' And the 'Go!', as you see, is following upon this sense of sin, and the overwhelming of Divine grace. And then—"I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" The Lord put it in the form of an interrogation. "Who will go *for us*?" Do you get that? '*We* are in need!'—the triune God! It is the plural, "*for us*". '*We have need of helpers; We are in need of someone to go.*' "Who will go *for us*?" This tests the motive for all service. What is it for? a reputation? self-gratification? Or is it '*for Us*'?

'For Us!' There is far more in that than it sounds. I always come back to this great man, Paul. I am perfectly sure that he would not have gone on very far in his work, if it had been for himself; to make a name for himself; to find gratification for himself; or for anything, other than that his heart had been absolutely captured by the Lord. It was for the Lord: "For to me to live is Christ" (Phil. i. 21). The Lord had 'got' him! It was a great love relationship. It is true, from one standpoint, that we are chosen. The Lord said: "Ye did not choose me, but I chose you" (John xv. 16). We are chosen and apprehended. In one sense, we cannot help ourselves; we are the prisoners of Jesus Christ. That is one side of it. But there is another side that is equally true. It is that the Lord asks for our hearts: He appeals to us as to whether He can have us. He has chosen us, but can He *have us*? Even though it is true that we are under the mighty constraint, will we voluntarily go with Him and for Him?

There was a day when David, tired, weary and thirsty, made an ejaculation, not perhaps intending that anyone should hear. Somehow David was a man who was always making ejaculations. If you look at the Psalms, you can see that he is always just breaking out about something: 'Oh that men would praise the Lord!' Oh! this . . . and Oh! that . . .! He seems to have been a man like that. That is how it was on that day. He just gave expression to a sigh, putting a thought into words: 'Oh for a drink of the water of the well at Beth-

lehem!' And some of his men who were standing near him heard. They took their swords, broke through the encompassing hosts of the Philistines, drew water from the well of Bethlehem, and brought it to David. What did David say? He poured it out before the Lord, and said: 'This is the very life of the men who drew it; I cannot drink that'. (I Sam. xxiii. 14-17).

You see the point. These men had such a loyalty, such a devotion to their lord, that he only had to ejaculate something, and they would risk their lives for him; they would take their lives in their hands for his satisfaction. Is not that what is here with Isaiah? 'For Us! for Us!' The Lord is saying: 'Oh, for somebody like this!' "Who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me." And the Lord replied, in effect: 'You are the man I want! That is what I want—a man with this experience, a man with this basis. Go! Go!'

Now, if you are feeling that all that I have said is not really necessary for the Lord's service; if you think I have been 'piling it on' rather heavily—'Surely we can be servants of the Lord without all that!'—if you think I am making a lot of it, making the Lord's service complicated, difficult, involved, laying down more than is really necessary: read what follows—read the commission, and I venture to say that, if you had to do the work that Isaiah had to do, you would never do it without Isaiah's foundation.

"Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn again, and be healed."

That was carried right on to the days of the Lord Jesus. John said: 'This thing that Isaiah was told to do is here with us to-day.' "Though he had done so many signs before them, yet they believed not on him: that the word of Isaiah . . . might be fulfilled" (John xii. 37, 38). Right along there in the days of the Lord Jesus, the work that Isaiah did stands. Of course it carries a very solemn message, and perhaps it carries a very big problem for us. But it simply means this—that these people had persistently, and hitherto with impunity, resisted the Word of God by the prophets; and it is a terrible thing to do that. If you do that long enough, there comes a time when you will not be able to believe when you want to, you will not be able to understand when you want to. You have brought your own judgment upon you. That is a

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terrible thing! It is the explanation of Israel's doom.

But let us leave that aside. Here is a man who has to 'go', and the effect of his ministry is only to be the hardening of many people. That is not pleasant ministry! It is going to create a good many enemies. The Lord said to Ezekiel: 'Son of man, I send you not to a people of a strange language and tongue, that you cannot understand: if I sent you to them, they would believe, they would receive your word; but I send you to the house of Israel, and they will not listen! that is where your difficulty lies' (Ezek. iii. 4-7). Very strange! The come-back is so often from Christian people themselves. The real fight arises in that realm, more than in any other. The hardest work of all is the work of having to deal with 'traditional Israel'. It is not easy.

But Isaiah was vindicated! "A remnant shall return" (vii. 3, marg.). That is the great word that springs out of his ministry. There were millions that went away into captivity under this judgment, but only forty-two thousand and a few more came back. "A remnant shall return", indeed—but he was vindicated in the remnant!

And God always has a remnant. We must leave the others. I do not expect, for one moment, that all Christians are going to accept God's full revelation as to His purpose. It would be folly to think that they will—they will not! You will find your main resistance from Christians, strangely enough. It is true! But, the vindication is in a remnant: a remnant *shall* return. Compared with the millions, the forty-two thousand may be very small; but the word of the prophet is: "Who hath despised the day of small things?" (Zechariah iv. 10).

T. A-S.

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

TAKING OUR PLACE

IN a room of Government House, Gibraltar, Lt. Clifton James stood cold with fear. He had been looking out of one of the large windows at the Square below, when, happening to glance upwards, he noticed a slight movement on the roof of a building near by. As he looked more carefully, he saw there a man in a beret with a rifle pointed straight into the room. His first impulse was to throw himself down on to the ground to escape what looked like certain death. Then he remembered that, although he was a junior officer, he was taking the place of General Montgomery, and in all his life 'Monty' had never been known to show any fear.

The story of Lt. James is one of the many wonder stories of the War. The Germans knew that General Montgomery would be in charge of the invasion of Europe, so in order to deceive them as to where this invasion would take place, the War Office planned to pretend that he was in Africa when in actual fact he was just ready to launch the Normandy landings.

The British authorities searched everywhere to find someone who could pretend to be Montgomery, and at last they found Clifton James, who was not only an actor but also a man who looked so like the General that he did not need any make-up to act his part. He was brought away from his work in the Pay Corps, and carefully instructed and rehearsed. It took much preparation to see that in dress, in speech and in all his ways, he copied

Montgomery exactly, but at last he did this so well that even the General's own friends were deceived. Thus it was that he set out on his journey of pretence to North Africa, and that was how he came to be in Gibraltar, which was his first stop. It now looked to him as though it might well be his last.

He had been left alone in his room, and on looking out of a window had seen this dangerous man on a neighbouring roof. Was this to be the price of taking the General's place? Was it going to cost him his life? He remembered how the War Cabinet had discussed whether he should be paid 'danger money'. They knew what a great risk he was taking. He even wondered for a moment whether the War Office might have *expected* him to be assassinated, for what could be better from the Allied point of view than the enemy's conviction that Montgomery was dead and would not be directing the invasion? No wonder he was cold with fear!

He remained quite still. Then he looked again. Now he could see more clearly, and realised that the man was indeed a spy, but not an armed one. What Lt. James had taken for a rifle was really a thin telescope. It was true that he needed to be careful, for he was being closely watched, but he was in no danger. He breathed a great sigh of relief, and went on pretending to be 'Monty'. Before he completed his mission, he had many further reminders of its perils, but this first experience was by far the worst.

History has many stories to tell of those who

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have taken the place of others, sometimes for duty, like Clifton James, and sometimes just for love. And in some cases they have not escaped as he did, but have sacrificed their lives for the one whose place they took. The greatest story of substitution, though, is the Gospel story of how the Saviour died for sinners. He took our place, though He knew very well that in doing so He would have to lay down His life for us.

It was an honour for a mere Pay Corps Lieutenant to take the place of the greatest British General. It was only humbling and shame for the Son of

God to take the place of us sinners. Lt. James suffered many fears, but nothing worse, and in the end he came home safely, without having come to any harm. How different it was in the case of the Lord Jesus! He was not spared, but went through all the sufferings of the Cross for our sakes. Now we can have eternal life because He took our place.

' Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
In my place condemned He stood ;
Sealed my pardon with His blood :
Hallelujah! What a Saviour!'

H. F.

WHAT GOD REGARDS AS OF SUPREME VALUE

IN the Foreword to their book *The Making of a Pioneer* Mildred Cable and Francesca French have this:

' Certain characteristics are common to all pioneers, and some of these characteristics are pleasant while others are unpleasant.

' They are not an easy-going class of people and are subject to an inarticulate urge, the impact of a driving-force pushing them forward to further effort and carrying them into what other men call " impossible situations " .

There is a sense in which only a comparatively few are God-appointed pioneers, and therefore it is true of them, as of all pioneers, that theirs is a lonely way.

But there is another sense in which every Christian is a pioneer. It is not long after we begin in the Way that we come to feel as though no one has ever been this way before, and we are having to learn everything from the beginning and for ourselves. In the deepest depths of our hearts we feel that no one really knows and therefore no one can really help.

This is *the* innermost reality of the life with God. It is true in a much greater way of the greater pioneers of the Kingdom. It is true of every venturer on the way of the heavenly calling. But whether it be pioneers such as a Paul, a Luther, a Livingstone, a Hudson Taylor, an A. B. Simpson, in their respective specific vocations ; or whether it be all the ' rank and file ' for whom—in Christ—" all things have become new " and we start with only the axe, pick and spade of the Word of God, faith in God, and the urge of God, there is one thing manifestly common to all. To recognise and grasp this one thing is to stand possessed of one of the most vital factors in endurance and attainment. It is this: under the hand of God there is always

maintained the balance of inward education or knowledge with any outward achievement. The real value of any true pioneer is not that he, by sheer force of will, got somewhere ; but that at every stage and in every phase he gathered knowledge, by which knowledge he learned the very laws of life, of survival, of salvation ; of effectiveness, conservation, and wisdom. He was not merely a doer, he was a learner in his doing, and a doer by his learning.

If we take the names mentioned above, this is perfectly patent. Paul, Simpson, Taylor, were doers, but their whole course was one of spiritual learning. God held them very rigidly to this. There were times when they could go no further, do no more, unless they had some new and fresh knowledge of the Lord. That knowledge resulted in a new phase of practical progress. It is of great educative value to see in such lives how each step in the work was the result of some new spiritual lesson learned in an inner walk with God.

If we try just to imitate the outward aspects and copy the resultant framework of such work, without the same inward history, we are in danger of being saddled with a corpse without life ; a machine without power ; a body without personality. All the reproductive works of God begin with an inward organic life, not with an outward form. Jesus has once and for all defined the law of that life in saying: " This is life eternal, that they may know thee . . . and him whom thou didst send " . The law of life is spiritual knowledge of God, and there is really no other true knowledge of God.

It is not true knowledge to have all the information about God that can be obtained by hearing, reading or studying, however much application there may have been, and for however many years it may have gone on. There are all too many who

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know it all in that way, who have been hearing it for years, but who, when really put to the test, cannot 'make the grade', but break down. The test is twofold: What does it mean to us in deepest hours, and what does it mean to others as perceived in us in their deepest need?

So, the Lord says:

"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 understandeth, and knoweth me . . ."

Jer. ix. 23, 24.

The context shows that this knowledge is related to the character of God. The attributes mentioned are those that can only be known by experience. Lovingkindness, judgment, righteousness, demand a background or foundation which makes those characteristics of God our very salvation from the desolating effects of their opposites. What a life it would be without lovingkindness; that is, unmitigated cruelty; without judgment; that is, no discrimination and recompense: no righteousness; that is evil, wickedness, and iniquity with no virtue

or rectitude, and no appeal because there was no integrity. The true knowledge of God lies in our very lives having been saved by what He is. How much we owe to His longsuffering patience, His faithfulness, His truth, and much more, having been made our rock when all else gave way; our anchorage in tempest; our hope when there was none apart from Him!

This knowledge comes by adversity, and if it is true that such knowledge is paramount and supreme, then we have the explanation of the whole problem of the adversities which befall the godly by the permission of God. It works both ways. Those who know the Lord best are those who have gone the deepest way. Those who go the deep way of trial do so because God puts the premium upon their knowledge of Him. They are the people who are shut up to God. But this knowledge is, firstly, constitutional: that is, it is to constitute a certain kind of person and character; and secondly it is vocational. It does not end with the person concerned, but is the essence of service, in time and eternity. God is very practical, and requires that things in His service are never merely theoretical but real and true to life.

COMING IN THE FULNESS

"And I know that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of Christ" (Romans xv. 29).

I have been stuck by the positive assurance of this statement: "I shall come in the fulness . . ." "I know . . ."—the Authorized Version says, 'I am sure that . . .'"—"I shall come in the fulness . . ." This man was either extremely conceited and self-confident, or else he was so humble as to forget himself in an overwhelming assurance of the power of the Lord. We cannot believe that he was conceited; we must, therefore, presume that he had a secret which made him so assured, without any qualification. We should have said, 'I hope I shall come in the fulness . . .', 'I pray I may come in the fulness . . .' He was able to say: "I know I shall come in the fulness . . ."

Mark you, if he had not done so it would have been nothing less than a tragedy, for this is the letter to the Romans, and in that letter there is enshrined the great chapter of the fulness, Romans viii. What a setting forth of the "fulness of the blessing of Christ"! Fulness of life, triumphing over sin and over death itself; fulness of light, guiding the steps of the sons of God, and shedding illumination upon the whole meaning of the uni-

verse, and the glorious objective of God; fulness of love—the love of Him who 'spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all'. I say, for a man to commit himself in such language about the fulness of Christ for the believer, and then to appear to the readers of his letters as one who was not in the good of the fulness, would have been a tragedy indeed.

Moreover, in that very chapter he makes it abundantly clear that there is no power on earth or in hell that can quench that fulness: indeed, the whole atmosphere of the chapter is to suggest that every onslaught, every attack, only contributes to the bringing of the fulness forth. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors . . ." "There can be no excuse", he is saying—saying it nicely, but saying it very firmly—"There can be no excuse, no legitimate reason, for the believer not to be in the good of the fulness." And, happily, we know that he substantiated his words. When he came, they were not disappointed.

We are not told much at the end of the book of the Acts, but enough is said to let us know that, battered though he was, and no doubt bewildered, as he had been in the intervening period, he was in the fulness. And, as the years went on, and as

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the letters went out from that prison to other churches, we know what fulness, what fulness poured forth from that man! 'I shall come in the fulness . . .', he wrote: and he was right!

I ask myself, Is this because he was an apostle? If so, it may not have much meaning for me, who am an ordinary believer. I cannot, however, but feel that, while he spoke personally, he spoke representatively. He spoke not so much of an apostolic mission, as of the movement of a man, coming and going—not only to Rome, but wherever it might be. 'I shall come in the fulness'; that was his expectation.

Now the fulfilment. You notice the next verse: "Now I beseech you, brethren . . . that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me". No self-confidence about this man, is there? Confidence, yes, but confidence in his Lord, and the sense of a shadow over his spirit as he writes, a sense that 'I shall need all the prayer that I can get in order to go through'. And, even so, little did he realise, little did he suspect, what lay between this letter and the actual arrival at Rome. He words it as though, when he has delivered his charge at Jerusalem, he will move straight off to Rome—that was the expectation which he had. We know that there were to be three years intervening, and grim years they were; so that, when we read of the actual arrival, as it is described for us by Luke, this is what is said (Acts xxviii. 16): "And when we entered Rome, Paul was suffered to abide by himself with the soldier that guarded him."

He did not know that! And I am so glad, because I do not know what is coming next—do you? The apostle Paul no more knew the events of the future, the way by which the end would be reached, than you or I do. No doubt he had his ideas—they were all shattered. But his spiritual expectation was abundantly confirmed, and that is what mattered. 'It is not *when* you come to Rome, Paul, and it is not the outward appearance of your arrival: it is, How did you come *spiritually*?' As to time, there is a long delay; as to outward appearance, he is not the apostle moving in to take large gatherings among the saints: he is a prisoner chained to a Roman soldier; but he comes in the fulness—Hallelujah!—"the fulness of the blessing of Christ"!

HUMAN WEAKNESS

What a picture of human weakness! That is how it worked out. No doubt, by this time, Paul had had enough experience to suspect, at least, that it might be like that, and it certainly was. He came

a picture of human weakness. He came, from Jerusalem, in the first place, out of a deep experience of failure. I do not know what you feel about Paul's going to Jerusalem, and his own failure; but I cannot but feel that in any case the church at Jerusalem failed him. They failed Paul. They had the great apostle there for about a week, as a free man, and almost the whole week was occupied with pettifogging niceties of the Talmudic law of the Temple, when they might have been drinking in his ministry. They did not think of the band of saints in the city, who could have profited by the apostle's ministry; they thought of the thousands of those 'zealous for the law'—the carnal ones—and they set Paul on a course, certainly a disastrous one, in order to try and pacify them.

And so he was taken on a false charge: he was not even attacked for preaching Christ; he was attacked for a supposed violation of the Temple, and put in the fortress there. Now, years before, when Peter was in prison in this very same city, Luke was able to write: "But prayer was made earnestly of the church unto God for him" (Acts xii. 5). I have searched Acts xxi, but I cannot find that he was able to say that on this occasion. And so we have to confess that Paul suffered through a failure—at least a weakness, and I do not think it is exaggeration to say a failure—of fellowship from the people of God, in the one city where he might most have expected it.

We cannot absolve him: I am not at all sure that his story is a very creditable one; I am not suggesting that he did not fail, both in yielding to them, and in his subsequent behaviour. It is difficult to feel that this was a man in the fullest fellowship with his Saviour, who did that artful trick in the Council, of setting the Pharisees against the Sadducees. It worked, but it was unworthy of the man. At that point he had a bad patch of spiritual life.

DIVINE POWER

Here was human weakness, then; weakness of his fellows, and, at least for the moment, his own weakness. The chain spoke of that—but it also spoke of Divine power. If it be true that Paul failed the Lord, it is also true that that very night the Lord appeared to him, and said: "Fear not, Paul . . ." From which I gather that, if Paul had been wrong, he had put it right. Do not think that it is only when you are on the crest of the wave of spiritual triumph that the Lord appears to you; He very often lets you just trust Him then. It is when you are realising something of your own

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frailty, but in penitence, and in true adjustment, getting back to Him, that He comes to you ; just as I believe He came to Paul in that prison, and said, 'Fear not ; you have still got to bear testimony in Rome.'

Think of the other side, though. Think of the Divine power manifested in the apostle through those three years. He came in the fulness, he arrived in Rome in the power of Christ, because, in the midst of that delaying period, he had been proving the Lord again and again. As far as I understand it, seven times at least his life was in imminent peril. From the first time of the attack by the mob in the Temple, to the last, when the viper fastened on him at Malta, he was very, very near to a violent death—a man, attacked by death, in constant perils, and yet in the fulness, undeterred, and delivered.

Moreover, a man who, through all those strange experiences, had a message. I think of him before Felix ; and Felix, the Roman Governor, hardened sinner that he is, trembles : that is fulness ! It did not convert the man, but it brought God very near to him. I think of the testimony that the apostle bore before Agrippa. I think of the shipwreck, with all its many days of suffering and trial : the one man stands out, towers above all the rest, in the power of God ; there is the weakness of man, but the power of God. In Malta, after the shipwreck, what power was known !

THE FULFILMENT

'And so they came to Rome' ! They came ; *he* came, as one whose affirmation had been challenged as much as it possibly could be. And that is what happens ! You have only got to say—*not* conceitedly, but in faith—'I shall come in the fulness . . .', and it is as though all hell bursts on you, to see that you do not ! He came as a man who, in some measure, at least, had had to stand alone ; had failed to find the support that he might most have expected to receive from fellow-believers, and from even a fellow-apostle ; but he came in the fulness. He was right—'I shall come in the fulness'. It is possible, then. And I believe this story is written, not to magnify Paul, but to say to you and me, dear brother or sister, if we are assaulted, if we are in trial, if we are in difficulty, even if we are forsaken—'You can still come in the fulness. The fulness is for you !'

You see, the secret of Romans viii is, after all, Romans vi. That is where the secret lies. It is not because Paul has been commissioned an apostle, merely, that he can say he will arrive 'in the ful-

ness'. Other men were called and commissioned for the Lord's service, who failed. It is because he knows the secret of union with Christ in His death, union with Christ in His burial, union with Christ in His resurrection, as a crisis and as a sustained basis of faith. For that reason he could come in the fulness. And you and I have the same secret. We, too, have our 'comings'—we come to work in the morning, we come home, we come to the meeting ; you do not have to go to the other side of the continent to have a 'coming'—our lives are full of 'comings'. And we can 'know', we can 'be sure', that we shall come in the fulness of the blessing of Christ. It is a challenge to every one of us, a daily, hourly challenge. Do we come in the fulness ?

With Paul this was undoubtedly an intensely personal matter. You will remember that it was on the ship, at the darkest hour, that he proclaimed, "I believe God"—not, 'I am an apostle', but "I believe God" ! not, 'I have had a lot of Bible training', but, "I believe God" ! not even 'I am an experienced preacher', but, "I believe God" ! That is why he came in the fulness. But he would be the first to say, 'Oh, how much I owe to the prayers of my brethren !' "I beseech you, brethren . . . that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me". Did they ? They had never seen him. Did they pray him through ? The answer is, I think, found in that very same twenty-eighth chapter of Acts—they went as far as they could to meet him. I am told that that Appian Market was the farthest point from Rome where they could be sure of meeting him. Up to that point there was more than one road ; from then onward there was only one road. 'We cannot go any farther ; we might miss him ; but as far as we can go, we will !' They went out to meet him, and you do not do that unless a man is really in your heart. They had prayed him through.

Well, he reaped the harvest. He prayed for them ; he ministered to them ; he reaped the harvest—*they* prayed for *him*. Do you wish that you might be prayed through ? Do you feel the need that you should be prayed through, that your life should be a life of fulness ? With these saints at Rome, I do not think it was the appeal for prayer, I do not feel it was the constraint upon them to pray, that made them stand by him. I think they received something of Christ from him, and they responded by bearing him up in prayer. If you pray for others—if you give what you have to them—you will not lack those who will stand by you in your hour of need.

H. F.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

PRAYING IS WORKING

"Much prevailing strength has the supplication of a righteous man in its working."

OVER half a century since Dr. Fleming Stevenson enriched the church of God with his gracious book *Praying and Working*. But needful as is the lesson that prayer must be accompanied by all right effort, that book taught also, and impressively, the truth expressed in our own title. What is here written is to prove and illustrate the thought that praying *is* working, and not merely an adjunct to working. It is a form of working, and not simply a somewhat properly added to our efforts out of reverence to the Almighty; nor is it only an appeal for His blessing to prosper our labours. When a righteous man prays he works. For prayer in the spirit is one agency by which the Spirit of God effects through the believer His will, and is, indeed, a putting forth of His energy. (Eph. vi. 18: Rom. viii. 26, 27).

Moreover, praying is not only working; it is the very highest order of working.

(a) It is that work to which our glorified Lord is ceaselessly devoting Himself: "He ever liveth to make intercession" (Heb. vii. 25: Rom. viii. 34). It is therefore our closest and highest co-operation with Him; at once our most heavenly and effective work.

(b) Prayer is that work which by itself brings to pass results which all other efforts of man cannot effect. Elijah by prayer alone controiled the weather for three and a half years, prohibiting all moisture, both dew and rain (I Kings xvii. 1).

(c) Again, prayer is the highest form of working because *it affects the heavens above*, and not only the earth-level.

The Scripture shows that the forces and operations of nature are under the domination of angels, holy and evil. If these do not regularly control those forces, they do so on occasion (Rev. vii. 1-3; ix. 14-15; Job i. 12-19: etc., etc.). Prayer affects their doings in two ways. Firstly, being itself an effort of the spirit of man, it is a set-

ting in motion of a force proper to that realm where the nature of being is spirit: "we wrestle against wicked spirits", and are thus an obstacle to their activities. And then, secondly, prayer is an appeal behind and above those heavenly rulers to the Supreme Ruler Who dominates *them*, and Who can suspend His rules under which angels ordinarily act. Not that man has warrant for direct appeal to angels; but prayer "moves the hand that moves the world", and can thus set in motion, and modify the workings of, those celestial powers.

Daniel "set his face unto the Lord God to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes"; and "at the beginning of his supplications the commandment went forth", and Gabriel was sent to instruct him (Dan. ix. 3, 23). Later (Dan. x. 2, 3), Daniel was again in prayer, but no immediate response was gained. Therefore he, like Elijah before him, persisted in prayer, "watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication" (Eph. vi. 18), and with fasting. After three whole weeks the response came, and with it the explanation of the delay. There had been no delay on God's part: "from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to humble thyself before thy God, thy words were heard". But a mighty evil spirit, then guiding the destinies of the Persian empire, had obstructed God's messenger (obviously no human Prince of Persia could have retarded the great angel), who could not proceed on his errand until reinforced in the conflict by Michael, "one of the chief princes" of that kingdom of the heavens (Dan. xi. 13).

It is enough for our present purpose to note how the praying of a righteous man caused motion, and even commotion, in the spirit world. And here again is a result that no other effort of man could effect.

Since therefore the Christian's greatest influence is exerted by prayer, he must inevitably be at his weakest when prayerless, and be strongest when prayerful.

SELECTED

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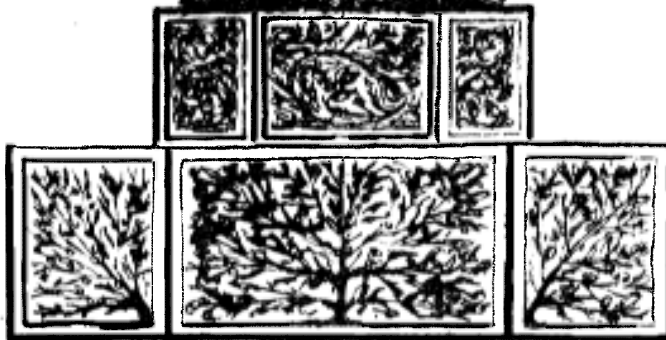
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"The Testimony of Jesus" Rev. 1, 9.



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July, 1959.

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 (literally—*full knowledge*) of the Son of God, unto a full-grown 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.

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THE ARM OF THE LORD

IX. RE-INTEGRATION OF ALL THINGS THROUGH THE CROSS

IN this concluding chapter we shall make little further reference to Isaiah's prophecies. We shall seek first of all to sum up, or review, the whole matter that we have been considering, and then to present a few additional thoughts arising out of the letters to the Ephesians and Colossians.

I would like you to draw a mental picture. Imagine, first of all, the Letter to the Romans laid down as a background, and then, superimposed upon it, a figure of the Cross. We have seen that the letter to the Romans sets forth the Cross as God's instrument for clearing the ground for His building, providing the place for the foundation of that great building which has ever been in His thought and His intention—the Church.

ROMANS

The Letter to the Romans finds the ground covered at the beginning with very much upon which God will not build—upon which He cannot build. As God surveys the human scene, with a view to laying the foundation for His Church, His glorious Church, He finds a condition of things so

tangled, so evil, so false and so wrong, that He says: 'I cannot lay My foundation on that; we must clear that all out of the way. We must set fire to it, consume it, and make a great clearing for this foundation.' And so, in the Letter to the Romans, the Cross is brought in and set forth as that which, on the one side, disposes of that whole state of things. And what a state it is! What a terrible condition is presented in the early chapters of that letter! The Cross is placed there to deal with it all, to get rid of it all, to consume it all. It is like the great brazen altar with its consuming fire, bringing everything to judgment, and leaving nothing but a clearing, an emptiness, a barrenness.

But then on the other side, God having laid His foundation, with the remaining chapters of that Letter a new prospect comes into view. Everything now is possible for God. We found in chapter viii so much said about God's eternal counsels and foreknowledge, His wonderful thoughts and conceptions in election, in predestination, in adoption, in conformity to the image of His Son; the creation redeemed from corruption; the children of God delivered from bondage. Everything now

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

seems to have come in for realisation, since the Cross has cleared the way.

That, then, is the first thing in the mental picture that I am asking you to draw: the Cross, as God's means for securing the foundation for everything else.

I CORINTHIANS

Now, from that Cross you draw radiating lines. The first line reaches to the First Letter to the Corinthians. Here the Cross is applied—not now to conditions in the world, not to those outside of Christ—but to conditions amongst believers that do not tally with the Cross. The Apostle brings the meaning of the Cross to bear upon the natural man, the carnal man, and all his works, upon all that has resulted from his presence amongst the Lord's people—the divisions, and all the rest of that horrible situation in the Church that is described in the First Letter. He says: 'When I came to you, I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified' (I Cor. ii. 1, 2). So the first 'radiation' from Romans is to all conditions inside the church that are not in agreement with the meaning of the Cross. God cannot get on with building until those things are dealt with.

We find the Apostle telling the Corinthians in that First Letter that the foundation is already laid: 'I laid the foundation, as a wise master-builder, and others build thereon; but let every man take heed what he builds thereon' (I Cor. iii. 10). The things that we find in that letter, as we have pointed out, are the things to which God says: 'No, you must not put those on My foundation. My foundation is worthy of something better than that. We cannot have those things in our clearing—they will only clutter everything up once more and make it necessary for us to go through the whole business of consuming all over again. Because every man's work which is not according to the Cross is going up in flutes and smoke—there will be nothing left.'

That, then, is the first outreach of the Cross as from Romans, to touch conditions amongst the Lord's people which are not in accordance with what God means by the Cross. God says 'No' to all that. 'I am not going to use that on My foundation; I am not going to build with that. You get rid of that, and then we will get on with the building.' As we saw in a previous chapter, those things were dealt with by the Corinthians themselves. The fire did burn among them—the fire of repentance, the fire of self-judgment, the fire of clearing, the fire of brokenness of heart (II Cor. vii. 11). Some-

thing happened, and they dealt with those things.

II CORINTHIANS

The second radiating line leads to the Second Letter to the Corinthians. Here you have the great restoration of testimony in the church in Corinth—in the location, in the city and in the world. The testimony that had been marred and spoiled can now be recovered. When God finds that state of heart, that state of spirit—broken, humble, contrite, very low before Him, 'trembling at His word' (Is. lxvi. 2)—He can get on with things in relation to testimony in the world. That is, He can now build. When He has that, then things begin to happen outwardly—it does not require a great effort, they just do happen—because here is the expression of the mighty dynamic power of God in the midst.

The Apostle says in that letter: "It is God, that said, Light shall shine out of darkness" (or, 'Let light be', in the first creation), "who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (II Cor. iv. 6). A few verses previously he says: "We . . . beholding . . . the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory" (iii. 18). That is the testimony: when things inwardly have been dealt with, the outshining is quite spontaneous. It is just the result of a deep, very quiet work of God. When God spoke into the first chaos His fiat: 'Let light be!', I do not think that there was a very great noise about it. There never needs to be a great noise when God puts forth His power. There is the 'hiding of His power', to use Habakkuk's phrase (Hab. iii. 4). But that is not the minimising of His power. God only needs to speak, and immense things can happen. He only said: 'Let light be!'—but look at the force and power of light in this creation. How terrific is the light!—and just from a word. It is symbolic.

But here at Corinth, the light shines out when God has right conditions; and that is how it will be. There need not be the great noise of publicity, of advertisement, of organization, of tremendous excitement and feverish activity. If the testimony is there, people will know it, people will feel it. If the conditions are right, something will happen. And if there is nothing happening, then we had better look to our conditions.

GALATIANS

The third line radiating from the Cross, as we saw in our last chapter, takes us to the Letter to the Galatians, where we are shown the resultant

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life in the Spirit. The Cross produces a life in the Spirit: it brings about a true, spiritual Christianity, as distinct from a merely professional, formal or ritualistic kind of Christianity that is all on the outside. This mighty thing, a true spiritual Christianity—a life in the Spirit: how real, how effective it is! That is what we reach when we come to the Letter to the Galatians. It says that the Cross works out in a life in the Spirit, and that true Christianity is a spiritual thing.

‘EPHESIANS’ AND ‘COLOSSIANS’

With that brief resumé of what has gone before, we now turn to a few additional thoughts from the twin letters, ‘To the Ephesians’ (so-called), and ‘To the Colossians’. It is quite evident that they are twin letters: you cannot read them without finding that you are covering very largely the same ground, only with a distinctive emphasis in each. And in them you come to some tremendous things.

Notice, first of all, that in these letters, as in all the others, the Cross is the foundation. In Ephesians, we are told that ‘we who were dead in trespasses and sins were quickened and raised together with Him’ (ii. 1, 5, 6): the Cross is there. In the Letter to the Colossians, we read of “. . . the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with him in baptism” (ii. 11, 12)—here you have the Cross again. The Cross is basic, that is the point. It is the foundation carried over from Romans.

Then, when you recognise that, you come upon what I think we may say are the two greatest things that have ever been disclosed by God. They are such wonderful things, that, if we really see them, not as in the Bible to be read, but as a reality in the heart, something is bound to happen to us.

Have you ever come upon something in the Word of God which has just overwhelmed you, carried you away? Perhaps I can illustrate this by a humorous little incident that occurred during ministry in the Far East. I was speaking in a meeting one day—of course by interpretation—when suddenly the dear brother at my side, who was interpreting for me into Chinese, went off into fits of uncontrollable laughter! There he was—he just could not stop laughing: and then the people caught it, and went off into laughter likewise! Well, this dear brother could not get back; he tried and struggled, but the more he struggled, the more he seemed to lose his control. I was not conscious of having said anything extraordinary—at least, nothing that would occasion such mirth. I

had to wait, and wonder what it was all about—wondering what on earth I had said to cause this. And even a little later on, when he had recovered somewhat, and we had got away from that, the thing came back to him, and off he went again; and this happened more than once.

So afterward, when I had got him alone, I said: ‘Look here, brother, what ever did I say? what did I say to cause you to go off like that, and all the people too? Did I say something so outrageous, so terribly funny to you?’ He said: ‘No, brother, no, nothing like that. It was just something we had never seen before, that is all; we had never seen that before!’

The point is this: it is possible to see something in the Word of God which carries you right away—it is so absolutely fresh, so new! The Lord deliver us from becoming so familiar with it all that it never provokes anything, it never stirs anything in us. It ought to be with us as it was with those dear Chinese friends.—But that is by the way. When we come to these letters, if we have our eyes really opened, we come to things that are calculated to take our breath away, really to carry us right out of ourselves: for they are very wonderful things indeed. Perhaps when I mention them they will be so familiar that they will not stir you at all; but I cannot at any time reflect upon them without being tremendously moved. The language of them is indeed familiar, but may the Lord bring home to us something of the real impact and meaning of these words again. Let us, then, see what is the key to and the sum of this letter, that is called the Letter to the Ephesians.

EPHESIANS: “ALL THINGS IN CHRIST”

Amidst all the wonderful fulness which is in this letter—and it is a very full letter indeed; almost every clause carries us out of our depth—there is a small fragment, which gathers the whole of the letter into itself; which really reveals what it is all about, what it all means. It is always very helpful to be able to get hold of something like that which contains everything. Here it is: “. . . *the mystery of his will . . . which he purposed in him unto a dispensation of the fulness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth; in him, I say . . .*” (i. 9, 10). “To sum up all things in Christ”. That phrase ‘sum up’ does not perhaps fully convey what the Apostle really meant and was saying. It goes as far as it can, but it might be better to say: ‘to gather together (or better still: to subsume) all things in Christ’.

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HUMAN DISINTEGRATION

When sin came in through Adam, a great process of disintegration commenced. First of all, it began in the man himself: the man was no longer a single entity, he was a divided personality. And every child and son of Adam is a divided personality; there is civil war in his very nature, in his very constitution. He is a divided man, a man who is in conflict within himself. Is not that true of all of us? We know enough about ourselves to know that there is nothing in our natures, our make-up, our constitution, that speaks of complete harmony. There is war within us—war in our make-up; war in our temperament; war in our whole constitution. We are broken; we are divided; we are disintegrated. That happened in the man himself.

And then it happened between the first two—the only two—the man and his wife. You can discern the elements of disintegration and disruption between them: the man starts blaming the woman, and that is the beginning of a domestic schism. There had been a wonderful unity and harmony; they were “one flesh”, it says (Gen. ii. 24); but now—something has come in, and they are no longer like that. When they were driven out of the garden, they were no doubt blaming each other, saying, ‘This is all your fault!’ We are familiar with that sort of thing—recriminations and so on. Division has come between them; there is a strain in life.

And then what of the family which came through them? Here you have Cain and Abel, the first children, involved in schism, division, disintegration, even to the point of murder. And out from the family, the thing spread to the race, until there ensued the great scattering, the dividing up of the race into its many, many parts, with all its diversity of languages, as we have it to-day. The whole race is broken to pieces, in a condition of utter disharmony. You pursue that through, and, before you are out of the Old Testament, you find the whole race divided into two irreconcilable sections, Jew and Gentile, hating each other with bitter hatred. The Jew will have nothing to do with the Gentile, calls the Gentiles ‘dogs’—unclean things—and will have nothing to do with them. And the Gentile nations react against the Jews, as we know they have done all along and continue to do to-day. The present state of the human race is one of brokenness, scatteredness, discord and hatred, quarrels and strife and conflict and war. From centre to circumference it is all in pieces, and all the pieces are against one another. There is no harmony, no unity and no integration in the human race.

GOD'S SECRET

But God had a secret. He knew all about that; He knew what would happen; He knew what would come; and He devised His own way of meeting it. He had a secret in His own heart as to how He would solve this terrible problem. This secret is what Paul, in this and other letters, calls ‘the mystery’. How would God do it? He would ‘sum up’, He would ‘gather together all things in Christ’. He would make His Son the integrating Centre and Sphere of a new creation, in which all these diversities and conflicts would never again be found. That is the sum of this Letter to the Ephesians—to ‘gather together all things in Christ’. I say, surely that is something to send a thrill through us, however often we may have heard it before.

And so, in that connection, three things come into view.

First of all, the Cross of Christ. You notice here that Paul says: ‘the enmity was slain’ (ii. 16). We have many conceptions and teachings on the Cross, but here is one wonderful thing, that in the Cross this enmity was taken hold of and destroyed. Where there is a true work of the Cross in any of us, that kind of national, or international, or personal, or social, or even Christian division ceases. The Cross is the instrument for dealing with all that—and it will deal with it. If the Cross really gets down to the depths of our being, the whole situation, both in ourselves and between ourselves and others, will change. The Cross does something, so that we no longer meet one another on natural ground at all. We meet one another on heavenly ground, on spiritual ground, on the ground of Christ.

Secondly, Christ Himself is the focal centre and sphere of that. We meet ‘in Christ’—that is the great word: “to sum up all things *in Christ*”. Notice how often that little phrase ‘in Christ’ occurs: everything is ‘in Christ’. He is the centre and sphere of this wonderful new integration. “In one Spirit”, says the Apostle, “were we all baptized into one body” (I Cor. xii. 13).

Thirdly, as clearly emerges from this letter, the Church is the vessel of all this. God's secret was not only that His Son would be the focal centre, but that the Church should be the vessel in which this unity should be displayed. What a tragedy that it is not more so! And yet, as I have said, where you get a true expression of the Church, this is what you find—that these disintegrating things are outside and the mighty integration of Divine love is within.

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You get a real testimony to the Body of Christ.

We are so familiar, of course, with the phrases and terminology. But it is a most wonderful thing to realise that, in the fulness of the times (we have not yet reached 'the fulness of the times', but I think we are getting very near to it), God purposes to gather together—not geographically and physically, but into one glorious unity of spirit—all things in Christ. God has determined to do that, and it will be a wonderful day when that purpose is realised.

'Slaying the enmity by the Cross' (ii. 16). Dear brother, dear sister, do give heed to this. If there is any enmity between you and another brother or sister in Christ, that is a denial of the Cross; it is a denial of Christ; and it is a denial of the Church. That is very solemn. Have you any enmity with another brother? or another sister? *It says here that in the Cross enmity was destroyed!* Where is the Cross—where is Christ—where is the Spirit—where is the Church—if there is still present that which the Cross is supposed to have—yes, and in reality *did*—put away? It has no place here.

In the great prayer that Paul prays in the third chapter (vv. 14–19), he says: "*I bow my knees unto the Father . . .*" Then we are a family! There you have the heart of things. And what is the chief characteristic of a true fatherhood and a true family? It is what Paul says here—it is love. Listen to what he says: "*. . . that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with ALL the saints*"—note that—"*strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge . . .*" There is a love in such dimensions that can do this thing, that can achieve this end of gathering together all the brokenness in Christ. It is only going to be done by that mighty, mighty love, with its breadth and its length and its height and its depth. That love is great enough to do it; but you and I have got to be strong, with all saints, to apprehend it. *Apprehend that love*, and God gets His end.

COLOSSIANS: THE 'FULNESS' RESTORED

We can only look briefly at the second of these 'twin letters'—the Letter to the Colossians. What is the great word, or statement, in that letter? It is this: "*It was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell*" (i. 19); "*and in him ye are made full*" (ii. 10). What has happened?

First of all, at the beginning of the creation, the

great Potter created, moulded, fashioned, shaped, so to speak a beautiful vessel. And as He stood back and looked at it, He said: 'It is very good.' And He filled that vessel with His fulness—what fulness He filled into the vessel of this creation! How full is the vessel of this creation, even now in its present condition—how full of the beauty and glory of God! But at the beginning it was filled with unsullied beauty and glory. And then, a great enemy came in and struck a blow at that vessel and shattered it to pieces: all that Divine, spiritual fulness leaked away—it has gone; and in its place you find, by comparison with what once was, only desolation and emptiness.

Now the Great Potter comes back, to 'make it again another vessel' as it pleases Him to make it (Jer. xviii. 4). Here is the vessel—the Church. This is the vessel of the Lord: a beautiful vessel, "a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing" (Eph. v. 27). As He looks at it according to His own thought and His own ideal, pondering all that He intends and all that He will realise through it, He says—'A glorious Church! It is very good.' And in this Letter to the Colossians we see the re-made vessel now filled again with all the fulness. The vessel is mended; all the fragments are gathered together; you cannot trace the cracks and the joins; this Church as He has it here is once again a beautiful whole; and now He fills it again with all His fulness. "That ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God" (Eph. iii. 19), is the prayer of the Apostle. "In him dwelleth all the fulness . . . and in him ye are made full" (Col. ii. 9, 10). That is how it is to be.

One thing that must be underlined is this: that, while this is a process which God is seeking to work out, an end to which He is labouring, we must remember that the achievement of this great and glorious thing—this 'gathering together' again of all things in Christ, this filling of that 'gathered together' vessel with all His fulness—requires, and must have, a continuous work of the Cross. That is the challenge of all that we have been seeing in the foregoing pages: the challenge of the Cross in everything, in relation to the great purpose of God. This re-integration, if the Lord is allowed to have His way, will be effected by means of the Cross. If there is anything contrary to integration, to oneness, it will always be traceable to something which has withstood, or is withstanding, the work of the Cross. That applies in our own lives, and it applies in our assemblies, our fellowships, our companies. If there is something that still represents disintegration, dividedness, schism; if things are broken, are not one entity, not one whole, it

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can be traced to a failure to allow the Cross to do its work in some direction or other. That is the inclusive, and the only, explanation. If the Cross really does its work, this integration will spontaneously result.

The way of unity is not the way of patching things up from the outside—the way of unity is the work of the Cross in the life. When the Church really allows the Cross to get to work in its very constitution, the problem of division is solved. And if there is spiritual poverty, if there is scarcity, if there is limitation in our spiritual resources, and we are not knowing this fulness, it is for the same reason. If the Cross works, you find that the measure increases, quite spontaneously: it always does so, when you get things out of the way that are contrary to Christ.

CONCLUSION

And so we finish where we began. "To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" If we have any interest in, or concern for, knowing God with us and for us in power, in support, in protection, in deliverance, in succour, this is the way. The answer to that question in Isaiah liii is found in that same chapter: it is revealed to *this* One who

goes to the Cross, who suffers the Cross; to the One who lets go all in the Cross; who goes down into shame and dishonour in the Cross; who loses all His own in the Cross: to Him the arm of the Lord is revealed. And it is revealed to all those who go that way with Him. History is the great proof of it. Throughout history, God's arm has been, and ever will be, bared for His Son, and for all those who are with His Son as crucified men and women—crucified churches—a crucified Church.

There is a passage of which we are all very fond: "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him" (II Chron. xvi. 9). The Cross is the instrument for testing whether our hearts are perfect toward the Lord, or whether we have personal interests, or worldly interests, or divided interests in any way. That word 'perfect' means 'complete' or 'whole': the Lord will show Himself mighty on behalf of him whose heart is complete toward Him. And where could we find a greater embodiment of one whose heart was completely, wholly for God, than in the Lord Jesus on that Cross?
T. A-S.

UNMOVED AND UNDISMAYED

"And when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; (now his windows were open in his chamber toward Jerusalem;) and he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, AS HE DID AFORETIME" (Daniel vi. 10).

THERE is something tremendously impressive about a man who is beset and attacked from every side, apparently overwhelmed, and who yet maintains a quiet, dignified persistence of faith and goes on with his God, unmoved and undismayed.

Daniel's troubles sprang from the fact that he had been marked out for advancement. "The king thought to set him over the whole realm" (v. 3). There were two presidents equal with him as well as many satraps under him. All these reacted violently to the decision about his promotion, so violently that they plotted to destroy him. At first they had a great deal of success. It seemed unlikely, or indeed impossible, that Daniel could ever obtain the supremacy planned for him. Yet he did! The evil scheme failed. The servant of God was delivered and placed over the kingdom. The means by which he was advanced must have seemed very strange. Yet they are in full harmony

with all that the Word teaches us about spiritual progress. Especially is Daniel's experience in accord with what is shown in the case of the Lord Jesus, that the way to the throne is by death and resurrection.

"AS HE DID AFORETIME"

The lions' den was a kind of grave. Daniel was not spared the grave; he had to go right down into it. Since, however, he was God's man and kept true to his God, he lost nothing and gained everything by that descent. His rivals went down into the same grave, and they stayed there. By the end of the chapter we find no more mention of presidents and satraps. They could not stand the test of the grave. Daniel, on the contrary, was given his place over the whole realm, not by any effort or planning of his, but simply by his maintained position of faith in God. The lesson is for us. We, too, in His amazing grace, have been marked out for advancement, chosen for the throne. This explains for us, as well as for Daniel, the peculiar bitterness of the conflict in which we are often involved. There are great issues in view; we need to know how to behave in the midst of it all, and what is the secret which will enable the Lord to fulfil

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His purpose in our case as He did in Daniel's.

We find that he came through wholly and solely on spiritual grounds. His own wisdom, his earthly authority, his influence among men, his experience, his friends—all these counted for nothing. As he was hurried away and thrown into the den, he must have been a picture of complete helplessness. There was nothing he could say, and nothing he could do. He did not try to wrestle with the lions; it would have been useless if he had. In a spiritual conflict—and ours is that—nothing but spiritual strength is of any use. For all his apparent helplessness, Daniel had a standing with God. The key to his emergence from the conflict in such complete triumph is found in our verse about his praying, and particularly in the last words, "as he did aforetime".

He was steadfast in his faith. Yet it would not be enough to think of his having faith in a merely general way, or being a man who habitually prayed for all sorts of things. We can only understand the nature of his steadfastness if we realise that he was keeping true to a definite and God-given vision. He had understood the purpose of God with regard to His people. Moreover, he had adjusted his whole life to that vision, as the open window and the "three times a day" prayer-watch show. He knew what God wished and intended, and had given himself wholeheartedly for its fulfilment. Day in and day out, fair days and foul, he kept himself in God's direction and stood for God's will. No wonder that human jealousy and spite were used by Satan in a determined effort to silence him! But he could not be silenced. He could not be made to close his windows. "Aforetime" he had persisted in his faith vigil; now that trouble was pending he refused to be turned aside from his set course with God. He had a spiritual 'routine', a holy habit, a steady heart purpose. When this brought him into the cross-currents of conflict, and the writing was signed against him, he seemed to take no notice at all, but calmly continued in his watch with the Lord—"as he did aforetime".

We may be tempted to wish that we were that kind of man, calm, steady, unmoved—wrongly imagining that this was a matter of Daniel's temperament. If so, it is good for us to remember the kind of man he could be. "I was affrighted, and fell on my face . . ." (viii. 17); "I Daniel fainted . . ." (viii. 27); "Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel . . ." (x. 12). This was no man of steel, but one very like most of us, with all our inward quakings, our timidity and our tendency to faint. Yet he was undismayed. In the midst of plots for his

destruction, in spite of tremendous pressure to panic or compromise, without any show of strain and in quiet dignity of faith he went straight on with the Lord. And so must we. Perhaps it will help us if we try to discover some of Daniel's secrets.

THE LARGENESS OF HIS VISION

The first reason why Daniel was able to proceed so calmly, as though nothing had happened, was found in the largeness of his vision. If we have a vision that is chiefly concerned with ourselves, our circumstances or our ministry, we shall be puzzled or offended when things begin to go wrong with us. We need, indeed we have, a vision of God's universal and eternal purpose in His Son, and this alone will save us from being overwhelmed in the hour of spiritual conflict.

Daniel looked back, far beyond his own time. The open windows looked out on an original purpose for the people of God, who had had their origin long before his own generation. The Jerusalem which he remembered was a poor affair compared with the true glory of Zion. Most of us are apt to dwell with regret on things as we once knew them, and to sigh for the days of the past. But it is vain, and altogether inadequate so to limit our vision. We have been called for something much bigger than that. We have a part in the Divine purpose which was conceived in eternity and realised in Christ by His Cross. If we set our hearts only on what we have known or experienced, on the limited sphere of our own past, we shall get into confusion when for the time being everything seems to be going wrong. Our natural vision is limited to the immediate, to the present experiences or to the tiny span of our own lives. We need to be saved from ourselves, and this will be by receiving spiritual vision as to the vast range of the Divine purpose in Christ. Like Daniel, if we look back far enough we shall be kept steady by the reminder of God's original intentions.

Daniel also looked forward. We are told that he not only prayed but also "gave thanks before his God". Of course there was much cause for thanksgiving in Israel's past history, but to the man of faith, the man of vision, the real motive for praise lies in the future. He had received assurance that there was to be a future for Jerusalem, a future even more glorious than the past. He knew that God would realise his end. It mattered little to him, therefore, if all the fury of hell raged around him for the present; it was of very small importance if he, Daniel, were swept off the face of the earth. Nothing could prevent the fulfilment of the

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purposes of God. Whatever else happened, the Lord would go marching triumphantly on to His goal. With this conviction, and his windows opened in this direction, Daniel could afford to ignore his enemies, and to treat all the decrees of men with dignified contempt. "And when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he . . . prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime."

The little calamities of the present time are contemptible in the light of the certain glories that are to be. We are meant to be people of eternity; we are called to view all present problems and difficulties in their larger setting. It may be true that we, like Daniel, seem to be involved in disaster, that for us the writing is signed which makes our own future quite hopeless. Our vision is not a personal one, nor is our ministry personal, so we must never allow ourselves to be overwhelmed by what is only personal. In Christ we have become closely associated with God's eternal purpose for the greatness of His Son. This is the largeness that will lift us out of our own natural pettiness.

Daniel saw far beyond his own surroundings. He had gone to his house and entered his own chamber. It may well have been a large room, as rooms go, but in any case it was bounded by the four walls of what was essentially his. He did not look at the things around him, but away through the open windows towards the city of his God. How important it was at that crucial moment that he should not look around to what was merely local, to the unpromising circumstances in which he himself was found, but should keep well in view the Divine prospect of the God-filled glory of Jerusalem. Only the eye of faith could see that city then, but Daniel had the eye of faith. Surely it was this vision that kept him steadfast.

There is a sense in which men who are under great pressure to capitulate or compromise can only resist the temptation by remembering that their 'cause' is much greater than themselves. They are kept true by the realisation that, provided they do not despair, the cause with which they are associated will ultimately triumph in spite of anything which may happen to them. How much more is this the case with those whose 'cause' is spiritual! Had Daniel's main preoccupation been about his own survival he could not have behaved as he did. If he had been thinking chiefly of how he himself could be preserved, he would probably have made terms with his enemies or in some way capitulated. To him, however, the vision was so great that his biggest concern was, not as to whether he could survive, but as to whether he could remain faithful. He felt that he had to be

faithful because of the very importance and vastness of the issue.

This constraint to be faithful was noticeable in every part of Daniel's life. It was true, not only in the prayer chamber when he was on his knees, but also in every feature of his ordinary daily life, that "he was faithful" (v. 4). There can be nothing mean or insignificant in the life of a man who finds himself associated with a great Divine purpose: he realises that this association demands a very high standard in every aspect of his daily life. Few of us can be placed in such difficult circumstances as Daniel was in Babylon. And very few indeed have kept as faithful as he did in the many tests and temptations which came his way. Perhaps it was because he had so learned faithfulness in the smaller matters that he triumphed so completely in this supreme testing.

If Daniel had considered it most important that he himself should survive, it would have been very simple for him to have refrained either from praying, or from kneeling to do so, or from leaving the windows open for all to see. After all, he was no slave in Babylon, but a man of great importance. He was no enemy of Darius, but his good friend. Had he wished he could have kept his personal safety, and no doubt he could think of many very good reasons why he should try to do so. But then what would happen to Jerusalem? What would happen to the purposes of God for His people? To Daniel it was the vision that mattered, not his own personal good. And in this very way he found his own deliverance. The man who remains true to the God-given vision can afford to leave the question of his own fate in the hands of the Giver of that vision.

This, then, is the challenge which comes to so many of us, the call to be faithful to the vision. Daniel reminds us of how important it is that one man should remain steadfast to the Lord. None of us knows how much of great Divine purposes may be served by our simple faithfulness. In a sense we do not matter at all. It is not important for us to avoid the den of lions, to be saved from difficulties, to justify ourselves or fight for our own position. But in another sense it matters supremely that we should be true to the Lord. In order that we may do so, we need to keep in view the largeness of the vision.

THE GREATNESS OF HIS GOD

To Daniel God was greater than all. It was as simple as that. He had many visions, concerned with all sorts of people, places and events, but he

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had one transcendent vision, and that was the vision of his Lord. None of the historical or prophetic allusions can be without significance, for the Word of God is never without meaning; but we shall have missed the essence of Daniel's story if we become occupied with things or people rather than with the Lord Himself. This is the second of Daniel's secrets of a steadfast life: to him the Person of the Lord towered high above all others. Prophetic truths may interest or enlighten us, but they will never save us in the hour of testing. Daniel's chamber was not a study—at least it was not then being used as such; it was his prayer-room, his audience-chamber with his God. As we tend to hurry to our best friend when trouble comes, so Daniel, when he knew the writing was signed, went straight home to his prayer chamber to commune with his Lord. He knelt on his knees not as a matter of routine or ritual, not to list a number of items for prayer, but to worship and to wait upon his God. As we have said, he was associated with a very great vision, but the central and supreme feature of this vision was the Person of the Lord.

This is as important to us as it was to him. When we come to the New Testament we must be careful to give due weight to every detail of its teaching. It is very wrong for us to ignore or disobey the injunctions, the admonitions and the explicit statements of the Word of God. Yet our supreme concern must be with the Lord Jesus Himself. To follow all the teachings and methods associated with the House of God and yet lack the overwhelming Presence of the Son and Owner of the House is to substitute an empty shell for the living reality.

Daniel's vision of the Lord was so great that it involved the eclipse of all his enemies. No doubt they were very imposing, 'the presidents, the deputies, the satraps, the counsellors and the governors' (v. 7). Whatever Daniel thought as he considered this long and formidable list, he gave no indication of being greatly concerned by it. He went off home to meet with his Lord . . . "as he did aforetime". To have his eyes on the Lord did not mean that he ignored his enemies or pretended that they did not exist. It only meant that because of their hatred he drew nearer to his Lord, realising that at all costs he must not be drawn away from that committal and that communion which represented the very heart of the Divine purpose. He was determined to keep on positive ground. It can be merely negative to get preoccupied with our enemies, or with the things that menace God's purpose. We shall never reach God's end by chasing negatives.

Daniel refused to be diverted from the main issue. He would not even turn aside to pray about his own perilous position. He had but one answer for his foes, and that was to continue straight on in his devotion to the will of God. We need to follow his example. Satan will always try to divert us from the positive end of God. If we can be drawn out into side issues, he will always provide such for us. They may be things that provoke us, some matter that never fails to arouse our irritation or anger. If we turn aside to pray too much about them, we shall have missed the real call to positive prayer. It is true that Ephesians vi stresses the call to prayer conflict, but it comes at the end of a letter that is devoted to the main vision of God's purpose in His Son. It is for this, and not for lesser or personal matters, that we are called into the spiritual battle. Or the devil may even keep us busy with some side issues which we like, good things in themselves, perhaps, but diversions from the principle one. The man of the Spirit refuses to be diverted. Like Daniel, he goes determinedly on.

Daniel's vision was so great that it also eclipsed his friends. There is no mention here of Shadrach and his two companions. We do not know where they were. Perhaps they were praying for him in secret. We do know, though, that there are times when we must go through alone with the Lord. This is no contradiction of spiritual fellowship. Such fellowship can only be healthy and vital if in all things the Lord Himself is the One we keep in view. Darius was also Daniel's friend. As a matter of fact he did his sincere best to help him. But it is not recorded that when Daniel knew that the writing was signed he sought out Darius, to talk the matter over with him or to seek his help. No, he went straight away to the Lord. With all his apparent power, Darius proved helpless in this matter. Daniel knew the Lord as 'high over all'. He could not have held quietly on his way as he did if he had not known a constant walk with his almighty Lord.

THE POWER OF PRAYER

In the third place Daniel had learned complete confidence in God's ability to answer prayer. Nothing could deter him from waiting on God, for he knew the power of prayer. Daniel was well acquainted with power; he had lived at the seat of it for many years. As a lad, he had seen in his own land the amazing things that could be done by this world-power. Together with his fellow Jews he had been taken captive by the mighty emperor,

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the "head of gold" surmounting all the Gentile kingdoms; and now for a very long time he had had his place at the heart of that terrifying world authority. He knew all about the decrees of an absolute despot and about the "law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not" (vv. 8, 12). And when he had considered it all, he was more than ever convinced that one man on his knees was more than a match for it all, that there is more power in the simple prayer of faith than in the greatest empire that this world can ever produce. He had learned his lesson. To him it was no mere theory, as, alas, it often is to us. He had proved it in the past and he was content to go on proving it. It was a special occasion, but he sought for no special remedy. He just went on praying "as he did aforetime".

When a man is up against something of satanic origin, he is forced back to prayer, for only God can deal with the great enemy. It is significant that the signed decree was based on a lie. Darius put his signature to it because of deliberate untruth. Those who brought it to him insisted that it had been agreed among "all the presidents of the kingdom . . ." (v. 7). Daniel was at least equal to his fellow presidents, and he had had no part in it. Had Darius known the truth it is certain that he would never have agreed to pass the law. Wherever there is a lie, Satan is not far away. And when we get involved in his activities we do well to stand back for a moment, to consider the whole thing, and to decide—as apparently Daniel did—that only God can deal with this situation. Of course we may need to state the truth or point out the lie, but how often God's servants have only got themselves into greater difficulties by trying to grapple with something that was too much for them, too strong or too subtle, when the very presence of a lie in the situation could have warned them that this needed not carnal but spiritual weapons. This is not a matter of opinion or judgment—we all make mistakes—but of an untruth in the realm of facts. What do we tend to do when we meet such a lie? Usually we want to fight it, to argue about it, to try to deal with it by our own actions. What did Daniel do? He went straight back to God, got on his knees and found a place of spiritual authority over it. He dealt with it all in the place of prayer.

That is where it was all done. The rest was simply the outworking. A painful outworking if you like, for it did not relieve him from the necessity of going down into the lions' den, to the great distress of his friend, Darius, who spent a wakeful

night worrying about him. He need not have worried. His own power had failed to deliver Daniel—human power always does fail in the face of spiritual opposition—but the man on his knees is the man in touch with the Throne. We are not told what sort of a night Daniel had, but it may well have been one of great inward rest. And this not because he had prayed about himself, but because he had devoted himself to the Lord's interests and could therefore afford to leave his own needs in the Lord's hands. He did not pray because he was faced with an emergency; he prayed because he was a praying man. He believed in the supreme power of prayer, and he practised what he believed. If only we would do the same!

Daniel had had to pray in order to obtain his vision. A man is no prophet unless he is first a man of prayer—" . . . he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee . . ." (Genesis xx. 7). But that was only the beginning. We must not think that revelation as to the will of God is an end in itself; it is but the first phase of a prayer ministry. When Daniel had prayed through to an understanding of the ways of the Lord, he then set himself three times a day to persevere in prayer for their fulfilment. His prayer ministry took him into the lions' den, but it also brought him out again, and he was able to see the thing right through to its glorious end. "So this Daniel prospered . . ." (v. 28). So—by praying through, unmoved and undismayed by plots and threats—this Daniel prospered. *This* Daniel—not the Daniel of the presidential office, but the Daniel of the lions' den—this Daniel prospered, not only in the reign of Darius but also in the reign of Cyrus the Persian, who was the liberator and restorer of Jerusalem.

This all happened in the last years of his life. That may be because the time of Jerusalem's liberation was at hand, and Satan the more fiercely attacked the man who was standing for it in prayer. If so, there is a special message for us, who surely have our testimony to give in the closing days of the dispensation. The kingdom for which we labour in prayer is not earthly, but heavenly: it concerns "the Jerusalem that is above" (Gal. iv. 26). Let us therefore encourage one another not to be moved by the things which threaten to quench or divert our prayer-life. And let us remember that this very experience was the way by which Daniel was brought to his appointed advancement. He went to the throne by way of the lions' den. Our Saviour ascended to the Throne by way of the Cross. We can only reign with Him if first we suffer with Him.

H. F.

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THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PRIESTHOOD

Reading: Malachi iii. 1-4, ii. 1, 2, 4-7; Revelation i. 20, ii. 1, 2; Exodus xxix. 1-4.

THIS last passage in Exodus is followed by the very full instructions regarding the consecration of the priests and their identification with the altar in all its many aspects, the great burnt offering, and the sin offering, and the trespass offering, and the meal offering. With every one of them the priest had to be identified. He was well and truly committed to the utter meaning of the altar.

Exodus xxix. 35-37, 44; xxxii. 1-6

This passage in Exodus xxix refers to the typical or ritual consecration of the priests, their complete and utter giving to God to serve Him without any reserve. They are a nucleus of the people of God, wholly separated unto Him. But the strange thing is that very soon it was Aaron himself who transgressed and broke the meaning of his consecration. It was he who led the people astray. It is only two or three chapters later—indeed that great consecration may just have taken place—and we find him making a golden calf; and the people cry, ‘Behold thy gods, O Israel!’ So we see the need of consecration being practical, do we not? Not just a visionary committal of some kind, but coming right down to issues that have to be dealt with.

*Exodus xxxii. 29-32;
Daniel ix. 3-5, 8-10, 20, 21*

A MESSAGE AND A MESSENGER

We are probably all conscious of our urgent need of continually receiving messages from the Lord. What is the Lord saying? For if we do not know what He is saying, where are we? We need His message. It is remarkable that this book of Malachi, the very last book of the Old Testament, speaks of the Messenger, and indeed, as you probably know, that is the very meaning of the name Malachi. We do not know whether there really was a man called Malachi, or whether he was just an unknown ‘messenger’ who came from the Lord. But he came with a message at an end-time, as the history of God’s people is culminating; he came with a message from heaven.

We do well to mark the very first note of it, in verse 2 of chapter i. “I have loved you, saith the Lord.” We need to give a big place to that, that the

Lord is toward His people. Whatever He says of rebuke and correction, it is with love in His heart. Some of the messages seem hard messages, but the hardness is necessary in order to deal with things that must be dealt with. Yet, withal, “I have loved you, saith the Lord.”

And then Malachi is not only himself a messenger, but he comes with a word from God. “Behold, I send my messenger . . . the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in . . .” (iii. 1). And when it speaks of the priests, it says: “for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts” (ii. 7), a means by which God’s mind and will are made known.

A MESSAGE TO THE RESPONSIBLE ELEMENT

What is God’s message, and to whom is it sent? The Lord’s final message is to the responsible element among the people of God. Notice that. That is the Spirit’s emphasis in the book of Malachi. The whole emphasis in Malachi is found in chapter ii, verse 1: “And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you.” ‘It is for you’. And for the rest: “My covenant was with *him* of life and peace”—Levi (ii. 4, 5). And the messenger of the covenant, when He comes, will “sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi . . . and they shall offer unto the Lord offerings in righteousness” (iii. 3). At the heart of the people of God there are those who have responsibility, those upon whom responsibility is laid, and who will be held responsible. Because it says elsewhere: ‘as the priests, so are the people’ (Hos. iv. 9).

In the Lord’s final message of the New Testament, we find an absolute counterpart. “The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand” (Rev. i. 20). It begins with the seven stars—yes, and the candlesticks, but first the seven stars. The message is—“To the *angel* of the church . . . write . . .”, and much of the message is in the singular. “*Thou* hast patience” (ii. 3). “I have this against *thee*” (ii. 4, etc.)—the angel of the church. Who is that? Well, we need not be analytical. It certainly does not mean someone in an official position. It means responsibility—the responsible element—in that place, in the church to whom the Lord is writing. There is someone whom the Lord is going to hold responsible. He says, ‘You knew, and you never either got right your-

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self, or thereby made a way for the people'. It is a serious matter that the Lord, before He mentions the candlesticks, refers to "the mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand"—a responsible element. Interestingly enough, the Greek word *angelos*, translated 'angel' in the Revelation, is also the Greek for 'messenger'. For, after all, if there is fellowship with God, there is also the responsibility to convey to the people what God has for them, is there not? That becomes the occasion for a message, for they must 'seek the law at the priest's mouth', says Malachi (ii. 7).

RESPONSIBILITY FOR A PURE OFFERING

Priesthood in the Old Testament is the type of spiritual responsibility, first Godward—notice that—and then manward. In Malachi both those aspects come out very clearly. Responsibility to God—for what? For a pure offering. The first responsibility is true worship. It is that God should get His due. It is that the Lord should have His rights. The whole thing becomes a jealousy for the rights of God. It is not first of all manward. We can be deflected into something secondary by putting man first. We must have God first, and out from a right Godward responsibility there will come a tremendous sense of responsibility manward.

"They shall offer unto the Lord offerings in righteousness" (Mal. iii. 3). The earlier part of this prophecy is occupied with the Lord's grief over the kind of offering they have been bringing—a mixed offering, a despising of His table, an inadequate honouring of God. He asks: "Where is mine honour?" (i. 6). Their hearts have become deflected from the Lord as their utter devotion and occupation. Instead of being jealous for the Lord, they have dropped on to a level where it does not really seem to matter much what the Lord gets—a sort of 'slipshodness' about the Lord. 'It does not matter really what time I get up, or whether I pray much, or how I spend my time, or how I use my money. The Lord is not really worthy of meticulous watchfulness and care.' You say, 'What has that got to do with it? Everything!' "Whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed," says the Apostle, "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. iii. 17). There is a grip on things that it is Godward, so that in our living, our working, our ordinary daily toil, it may be 'not as servants of men, but as servants of God, with a willing heart doing service unto Him and not unto men' (Eph. vi. 6, 7).

Now this is not to condemn us—it is to help us, it is to bring us into a heart attitude that is a pure offering continually. Is the Lord worthy of any-

thing less than the best? Of course we all say He is not. We might think that ordinary things are not for the Lord. But they are *all* for the Lord. Our work is for the Lord. Young people, your work where you are training is for the Lord. You are not there just to get it over and then be something else. You are there for the Lord. You are there to do your work 'unto the Lord', and give Him first place in all things. Older people may say, 'Well, I know all about Christian things—I am nearly retired'. I hope there are not many like that. Older people have a real test of faithfulness and finishing in glory. God's Word speaks much about a glorious finish. Moses' 'eyes were not dim' (Deut. xxxiv. 7). What a glorious finish! Caleb retained the strength of his youth to the end (Josh. xiv. 11), and I believe the Lord wants His saints to do that. The saints should be 'unto God' in the ordinary, long-wearing-out experiences of life as it has to be lived.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR A PURE MINISTRY

The second thing is a pure ministry. A pure ministry is the conveying of Christ, is it not? It is reproducing Christ. But only as we are Christ-occupied do we convey Christ, or reproduce Christ. If we are occupied with our own things, or even with the things of God as a mere interest, we do not bring or convey Christ. People are in desperate need. There is no question about that. We dare not live unto ourselves. Many of God's children are in such confusion. There ought to be 'priests'—that is, those who are in touch with the Lord, in whose mouth is the law, so that the children of God can 'seek the law at their mouth'. True 'priests' should be those who have the answer to the need of God's children, not as superior ones who put others straight, but as those who, out of a brokenness and a humility, have found the answer, and, having found it, are therefore able to convey it.

And what about those who do not know the Lord? Well, they do not want anything but reality, and we need to have that, do we not? All this tremendous matter of the Gospel, which comes upon us continually, is going to come out of this right relationship with the Lord. The more right we are with the Lord, the more our hearts will go out continually to the unsaved. We shall be those who have a pure ministry and bring God's thoughts and His salvation to others.

FEATURES OF A PURE PRIESTHOOD

Let us now just briefly touch on the three vital features of this pure priesthood.

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(a) CONSECRATION

The first is consecration. Have we as our background a life wholly committed to God? Do we know the reality of committal to the altar? I am sure that in many cases that is true, perhaps long back in your history. Praise the Lord for every sense in which we have responded to Him, and according to Romans xii. I have presented our bodies a living sacrifice. Long ago you have said: 'Lord, I want to be for You. I want to come to the altar, and there to repudiate everything that is just me—everything first of all that is just sin, and then everything that is self. Lord, I want to be done with it, so that I can have a new ground altogether'. We want to be wholly the Lord's, wholly for Him—"a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. And be not fashioned according to this age: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind".

Yes, that process is going on after the committal crisis. The Word of God shows how thorough is the claim of Christ upon us, does it not? The burnt offering, the sin offering, the meal offering—Christ our very righteousness as the meal offering; our character, our qualities, to be just an appropriated feeding upon Christ, that that may be offered to God. There is a great deal in the consecration. But, you know, a lot of Christians come to crisis after crisis of a kind—a sort of fresh consecration—but nothing seems to happen. Every time they hear a message, they have another bad time, and have to have another crisis. There are some people who get bowled over every time the Word is preached, because they still have not really got through. Let us get the matter of utter committal to the Lord settled once for all, and not keep talking about it.

(b) SEPARATION

The next point is separation. What does that mean? It means that a separating sword comes between us and all kinds of things, either external or internal. Only the Lord can show what they are. The dividing begins, and that is the story and record of the whole tribe of Levi. They took the sword against that which was dear to themselves, and therefore they were blessed. "He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. x. 39). It means taking the sword against ourselves daily and continually.

Now, this is not a self-mortification, it is not a sort of introspection: it is doing real business with

the sword, it is the actual execution. For separation is, first of all, by the sword, that is, by cutting; and I would say to young people, and perhaps to older ones too, that you never really practically go on with the Lord without the sword cutting asunder, without having to say, 'Well, this has got to go, or that.' Do not cut off something the Lord has not told you! But, when He begins to speak, the sword has to come, and that cut means two things. First of all, it delivers, and secondly it is followed by healing. When He wounds He heals. You never are any the worse for the Spirit working. Isn't that wonderful? You are always better. The sword of the Lord does the right thing and makes us better.

But the Word speaks not only of that, but of the fire, and I believe that, in that refining fire that He has to take us through, so often He is purifying us deeper down than we can fully understand, that we may 'offer an offering in righteousness'. If you are going through deep waters with the Lord, trust Him in that time. "That the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. i. 7). In a committed life, the fire only works purification—nothing else. When we are committed to the Lord the fire is doing a work that is so necessary. Much of our waiting, much of our problem and inner perplexity is quite fiery. What is it all about? Well, we must trust that He is getting out of it a pure offering, a priesthood that does indeed become His vessel for all the people.

(c) BURDEN

Finally, the third thing—burden. Consecration, separation, burden. Moses said to the Levites: "Consecrate yourselves to-day" (Ex. xxxii. 29). But how immediately he himself was consistent with what he said. Do you see that? Moses said: "I will go up unto the Lord" (v. 30), and before the Lord he was a man with no personal concern at all. If ever the sword had done a delivering, it had done it in him. He was not interested in himself. He was burdened for the Lord's concern. He said, 'Lord, Your people—please forgive them, and if You cannot forgive them, then blot me out' (vv. 31, 32). What an utterly disinterested, loving concern for what the Lord wanted—His glory in the people.

This separation that goes on in us is an inward separation from evil and from self. It is not a separation from God's people, The Lord Jesus was

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'separate from sinners' (Heb. vii. 26), and yet we read: "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them" (Luke xv. 2). He was undefiled, but He loved to the end the most loveless and unlovely people. We have got to be a people with a *burden for God's people*, not an *opinion about them*. The Lord deliver us from a mind and an opinion which is a subtle form of self, and give us a love for them that says, 'Lord, what does it matter about me? Look at the need of these other people'. Nothing superior, but we might call it a selfless simplicity—a selfless simplicity in a burdened heart.

What about Daniel? Daniel was a priest through and through. If ever a man knew consecration, he did. He and his friends 'would not defile themselves with the king's meat' (Dan. i. 8). He was willing to go through the lion's den; his friends went through the fiery furnace. He never compromised an iota, did he? That is separation. But in that inner separation of heart, he lived in the midst of iniquity and confusion. He lived at the court of that worldly empire unstained and unsullied, and not only did he move as an influence in a difficult situation, but he was a man with a selfless concern for the people of God, and he identified himself with them. He said: 'While I was confessing my

sin, and the sin of the people' (ix. 20); and you know how, when he took that attitude, Heaven came in. 'As I was confessing, the man Gabriel came and said, O man greatly beloved, the Lord says, This is what I want'. No sense of being better than others, but rather the reverse. Yes, "my sin": how hopeless we all are. Real priesthood will never give us a sense that we are better. It will show us more and more how that only as we cleave to Him have we anything at all.

Yes, but the consecration needs to be settled, the separation needs to be made real, the burden needs to become a reality; and out of that the twofold effect will be a pure offering, 'a sweet savour to God', both 'in them that are saved and in them that perish' (II Cor. ii. 15). There will be an overflow out of this. The priest's lips shall therefore 'keep truth, keep knowledge, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts' (Mal. ii. 7).

May the Lord make us those who are spiritually committed to the Lord to bear His burdens, forgetting ourselves, not as apart from the saints but very much of them, with an inner relationship with the Lord that means life for them as well as glory to His Name.

C. J. B. H.

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

SPREADING THE FIRE

THEY were two common safety matches, and they lay side by side, all that remained of a once full box. You would not have known the difference between them. They had been cut from the same piece of wood; their value was equally small; they looked exactly alike. Yet one of them was destined to bring comfort and health to many people, while the other was to be the means of spreading much sorrow and misery.

When Mr. Stokes went into the basement furnace-room, he took the box with its two matches with him. For many years now he had been caretaker of a large block of offices, having as one of his many duties the task of keeping the central heating going in the cold weather. During the past week or two he had looked often at the large supply of coke which was ready for use, and several times had confided to his wife that it would be any day now. The day had come. He had been ordered to have the heating on for Monday morning. This was Sunday, so Mr. Stokes went into the furnace-room to get things started, proud of the fact that with his experience he could light the fire with the first match, and happy in the prospect

of the congratulations which would come from the many office workers, who would be glad to find the premises warm when they arrived the next morning.

The paper, wood and coke were laid with care, then one of the matches was struck and applied to the paper. Soon the fire was well alight, and Mr. Stokes threw the used match into the flames. Its work was done. For this it had been made, for this it had been chosen from the box, and for this it had been spent. And well spent, too! As we have said, it became the means of bringing comfort to many people through the whole of that winter. Important business men, and still more important clients, directors and secretaries, workers and callers, they all received the warmth that began with that one little match, warmth that kept them in health as well as in comfort.

When he was sure that the fire was all right, Mr. Stokes went back to his basement flat, put the box on the table, and settled down in the armchair for his Sunday afternoon nap. It so happened that his son, Stokes Junior, was just going out for a ride on his new motorcycle. As he looked and saw

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the box on the table, he remembered that he had no matches, so he picked it up and slipped it into his pocket. While Mr. Stokes slept peacefully in his armchair, Stokes Junior roared away through the London streets and out into the country, thrilled at the power which carried him farther and farther away. However, he could not go on for ever, and when it grew dark he decided that he must turn back again. Before doing so he stopped to smoke. It was rather windy, and now that he came to look more carefully into the box, he found that it had only one match. He left his machine by the roadside, climbed through a hedge, and looked for a place of shelter where he could light his cigarette. He found a haystack in the field, and, by standing near that, he was able to strike the match, light his cigarette, throw the used match down and clamber back on to the road.

The second match had now fulfilled its destiny. But had it? For while Stokes Junior was riding back home to bed, there was a smouldering patch at the foot of the haystack where the glowing match had fallen. The wind fanned the glow into a flame, the fire spread into the haystack, and it was only the persistent barking of his dog in the early hours of the morning which woke the cowman to find that the haystack, farm buildings and his own cottage were all on fire. He roused his family, but when they rushed out of doors they found that by now the fire was so fierce that it had

spread to the rest of the row of cottages. At last the farmer himself came hurrying over, shocked to discover his own loss and the loss of his workers. Mercifully nobody lost their life, but who can tell the dismay and sorrow felt by those who had to stand helplessly by, while all their precious belongings went up in smoke?

All this had been caused by one little match. Like its companion it had been soon spent, but in this case it brought not glad comfort but widespread misery. Not that we must blame the matches. It was not their fault. Their different destinies were the result of the hands that picked them up. In the hands of Mr. Stokes, either of them could have caused blessing to many. In the hands of his son, either could have spread sorrow and loss.

Boys and girls, our lives are like those two matches. They are small, of little value in themselves and soon spent. Who owns us, who takes us in hand, who uses us? These are the important questions. In the hands of the Lord Jesus we can spread the fire of His love wherever we go. In the power of self and sin we can cause untold misery and suffering. "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" (James 3. 5, A.V.). How much blessing we may bring to others if we put ourselves into the hands of the Lord Jesus! He waits to use us to spread the warmth of His love in a cold and needy world.

H. F.

THE CROSS AND THE GOD OF HOPE

"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans xv. 13).
 'The God of hope fill you . . . that ye may abound in hope!'

AS you know, the apostle has worked his way up to this point through a long and detailed argument. He has covered the whole course of things from Adam's first sin, tracing all its consequences and its outworkings, through all the generations up to Christ; then placing at the end of all that, the Cross of the Lord Jesus; and then, from that point, opening up an entirely new prospect and future. The Cross is the terminal point up to which everything led, and from which everything takes a new rise. Following all that history, explanation and teaching, the apostle comes at length to this all-embracing title: 'The God of Hope'.

As we view the great situation that is presented in this book and in the New Testament, we find

ourselves faced with a strange thing, which looks like a paradox. It is this. God has written over the whole course of history the meaning of the Cross in this way, that the only answer that He can give to sin, to evil, to disobedience, and to all the fruit and results thereof, is travail, despair and death. And yet, withal, He is the God of Hope. He is saying that travail, passion, despair and death are *the only way of hope*. That is written in the whole history of God's dealings with men. Ever since Adam's sin, and (in him) the race's fall, God has had to work on the basis of the Cross of Christ. The Cross has been implicit in all God's dealings with men, and not only in general, but with His own people in particular.

The Cross means suffering; it is the very symbol of suffering—we know that. The Cross means travail and anguish—we know that. The Cross means despair. The great cry at the end of that ordeal was the cry of despair: 'My God, My God, Thou hast forsaken Me—why?' And the Cross is

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death. But, with all that, in God's desire and God's intention it is unto joy ; it is unto sheer thankfulness ; it is unto hope, a new hope ; it is unto life—all the things which are exactly the opposite to what the Cross seems to say.

God is the God of Hope, even when you look at Calvary, and all that is going on there, and see the One there, and hear His bitter cry. If you understand it, and if you look at history—Adam's sin, and fall, and all that in which the race was involved thereby, all the tragedy and the anguish and the passion and the evil of the generations—and see why God, not only allowed it, but had to establish that régime, issuing in despair—the answer, strange to say, is: He is the God of Hope. That is His way of hope, and His only way of hope.

The Cross has always been God's way of salvation, God's remedy. It is a very drastic, a very terrible remedy, but it is God's remedy. And if it is an effective remedy, then it produces hope ; it is something with hope—new hope—as its issue. The Cross is not a symbol ; the Cross is not an object : The Cross is a mighty power, a perpetual power ; an enactment once in history, but a power running through all the ages—we have said implicit in the old dispensation, explicit in this dispensation. From the first sin to the last, the Cross is a power at work.

Now there is one thing against which the Cross stands: namely, a state that is other than that which God intended. That has, of course, many aspects. We are going to look at just one or two of them ; they are perfectly apparent in the Bible.

THE CROSS AGAINST A CHANGED STATE

Firstly, the Cross stands over the *nature* of things when that nature has become different. Whenever the nature of things has changed from what God either made it at the beginning, or intended it to be, God has brought in the Cross in some way or another ; at once He has introduced the Cross. The nature of man was changed at the beginning ; he became something different in nature from what God intended. We all know that by our inheritance. And immediately the Lord introduced the Cross in the law of travail, of passion, of adversity ; He wrote immediately over that state, Despair and Death. The Cross stood over against that changed state. The only hope for recovering the divinely intended state, condition, nature of things, lay in the Cross.

The Cross is the great purifying agent—and purifying simply means getting rid of mixture.

When there are things which do not correspond or tally ; they are of two natures, two realms—two opposing elements ;—when there is impurity, adulteration, the Cross stands four-square against it, in order to purify. The very first thing with God—whether in the individual, or in any company of His people locally, or in the Church universal—is its purity, its cleanness, its separation from all iniquity and all mixture. Our Christian life is based upon the Cross, individually, locally, and universally. The Cross sees God's mighty, terrible, eternal declaration against impurity—the contamination and corruption that has come in to make a state, in man and in the world, which He never intended to be.

The only way of purification is by bringing home, in grim reality, the hopelessness, from God's standpoint, of that which is not pure. How true that is, in a general way, as we look out on the world—the hopelessness of an impure, unclean, mixed state of things. The God of Hope demands, therefore, complete cleansing in that realm, and the constituting of something pure, something clean, something unmixed, untainted. If you look into the Bible, with all its wonderful symbolism of what God's thought is, you will find that His thought is transparency, crystal-clearness. The end of God's work in this creation, as we see it at last in the book of the Revelation, is a jasper stone—something pure, clear as crystal. And it is the Cross and the Blood of the Lamb that leads to that.

If, therefore, the Lord sees any state that He never intended to be, that contradicts His mind in this matter, He will bring in the Cross as a working power ; and, where that is found, there will begin to arise a situation. We find we have come to a standstill ; God is not going on ; we are in distress ; we are in travail ; we are in anguish ; we are in despair ; we are coming to death. The Cross is working in that way in order to produce a situation full of hope, full of prospect. The law is very clear.

The first thing we see, then, is that any state that is not according to God's intention has to be cleared up by the application of the great principle of the Cross. There is no hope for anything that is not pure in His eyes.

THE CROSS AGAINST REDUCTION IN DIVINE THINGS

Next, suppose that things have become *less* than God intended they should be. God intended something full, great, and things have become smaller than He intended. And the history of Christianity

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is the history of that tendency—it is more than a tendency, a real working—in man's reducing both God and God's things to his own human measure ; bringing everything of God, and God Himself, within the compass of man ; man reducing God to himself in measure ; making God less than He is, and the things of God less than they really are. We can see how that has gone on, and is all the time going on, as a trend, as a tendency, as some working. And we are always near that peril of things becoming less than God meant them to be. God intended something very great ; and here is loss, or the peril of loss, reduction ; things becoming smaller, losing something.

Whenever the Lord sees that working, or that peril, becoming very real, He introduces the Cross, and travail begins, and distress, and suffering ; everything comes into a realm of uncertainty and weakness and question. A sense of failure and despair is written—We are not going on ; we are not going through. God intended something great, and it has lost something of that greatness, or failed to go through to that greatness ; it has become something smaller than He intended. He is not going to allow that ; He reacts. And oh, what tremendous reactions history shows in this very connection.

Take just the illustrative case of Israel. While Israel was a chosen people, taken out of the nations for God, God never, never intended Israel to become something in themselves. He never intended that Israel should be the beginning and the end of all His work. He intended Israel to be a 'light to the Gentiles' ; to be a testimony to God to all the nations ; to be a ministry, a missionary instrument, to all peoples, that all nations should walk in their light, or come into the light of God as amongst them. They were raised up, not for themselves as an end, but for the whole world, as God's apostolic nation, to evangelize the nations with the knowledge of God.

What did Israel come to? To despise the nations ; to call them 'dogs', to shut them out, and shut themselves in from the nations, and have nothing whatever to do with them ; to look upon them as something to be despised, to be rejected, to be cut off. 'We are the people ; everything begins and ends with us.' The nation became something smaller than God intended, and there is no hope in that direction. The end of the story is that Israel, while of that mind, must be put aside, be broken, smashed, brought to despair, to hopelessness.

There is a large lesson for us to learn, and ever bear in mind, that, with all that God gave to Israel,

and all that God is willing to lavish upon us, it is not for ourselves, it is not to end in ourselves. Nor is it to be allowed to make us just something in ourselves, that 'We are the people'. It is a trust—a trust for all men. The apostle Paul recognised that ; and what a tremendous thing his recognition of it meant in his own case, when you think of him as a typical Israelite. His vision and ministry embraced 'all men'—"that we may present every man"—not, every Jew!—but "every man perfect in Christ" (Col. i. 28). He is the man who brings in the immensity of things, is he not?—the immensity of Christ ; the immensity of the Church. If there is one thing about the Church that is so evident in the New Testament, it is its greatness. How great it is! It takes its character and its dimensions from the Lord Jesus. Any who have seen the greatness of Christ can never tolerate a 'little' church, a 'little' fellowship,—a little exclusive thing that is an end in itself. It must have a universal vision and a universal heart. To get that, any tendency to become something less will be met by the Cross, and there will come in hopelessness, despair, arrest, a sense of no way through, and a great deal of inward suffering and trouble and perplexity.

The Cross is the way of salvation : it is the way of salvation from something being smaller than God intended ; but it is a painful way ; it is the way of travail. The Cross releases from all smallness. The Lord Jesus made that clear in His own words: "I came to cast fire upon the earth . . . I have a baptism to be baptized with and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" (Luke xii. 49, 50). 'How am I straitened!' But the baptism of the Cross, of the passion, being accomplished, He is released from all His straitness. This is no national movement now ; this is not limited to Palestine, or to any other spot. He is released by the Cross from the smallness of Judaism, Israelitishism, Palestinianism! He is released into the universal. But it is a painful way, that release ; it is a breaking and a rending. So the Lord would have us ever remember that He does react, and react very painfully for us, if anything that He intended to represent His greatness and His fulness becomes less than that.

THE CROSS AGAINST HUMAN WISDOM

Once more, when anything becomes governed by *human wisdom*, by the mind of men, when it becomes brought into bondage of the 'scribes', the Lord has always brought in the Cross against that. You see it again in Israel. The Cross has been

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introduced over against that situation where the scribes and the rulers of Israel gave to Divine things their own human interpretation, imposed upon the things of God their own mind; created this great and intolerable burden to which Christ referred—simply the mind of man imposed upon Divine things. And it always means bondage. The Lord is not going to allow that. And so He reacts again, and there comes an *impasse*. And what is the nature of this new crisis? Absolute bewilderment; a situation where you do not know what to do, where to look, in what direction to move; how the situation can be resolved. It is altogether beyond human wisdom. It is an *impasse* of confounding, confusion, and despair. What can we do? what shall we do? how is this situation to be met? At every effort you are defeated.

The Lord has got to rescue us out into the realm of Divine revelation from any merely human or mental holding of Divine things. It is a tremendous thing that the Lord must have—this realm where He is perfectly free, if He wants to, to give new light that may seem to upset all our interpretations—all the mental power of the scribes and the Pharisees—to upset the whole thing.

That is what you find in the New Testament, in the book of the Acts. Here is Peter, a representative of Israel; here is Paul, one of those interpreters of the law, who held everything within the limit of their own minds, and said, Our word is final! our interpretation is the authority! You have to bow to it! What is the Lord doing with men like Peter and Paul, and others in that book? He is bringing them up against situations where, if God does not now come in with some new light and some new revelation, they are at a standstill. He was taking them altogether beyond their best traditions, their strongest convictions, and their settled interpretations, and was making them see that the Bible meant more than they, with all their learning and knowledge, had realised it meant.

Yes, Leviticus xi stands true about unclean creatures and reptiles not to be eaten. Does the Holy Spirit contradict that when He tells Peter to 'Arise, kill and eat'? Not at all. Leviticus xi had a meaning that Peter had never seen. He is up against something now that seems to contradict his knowledge of the Scripture; but in principle it does not—it just does not. One can only hint at that. You see, we bind the Word of God, and do not leave God free to enlarge the revelation, that He is meaning to give new light. And if that is a peril, or if we come to the place where our interpretations are made binding and limiting, He will bring in the Cross, and bring us to a place of utter

confusion, where, if God does not now give us some new light, we are finished; we have not got the wisdom for the situation. What is He doing? The God of Hope is getting rid of a hopeless situation. And it is always hopeless when man is the last word in anything!

THE CROSS AGAINST LEGALISM

Finally, when things have become a legal system, bringing anything of God into bondage, God has reacted with the Cross, and it has been a terrible, devastating reaction. The breaking of legalism, of bondage to the Law, was a terrible business, and it always is. The Lord is not going to tolerate anything like that—making His things of the Spirit a tyranny of law. He will react for the Spirit's complete liberty in all things.

So we see that the Cross stands between a pure, unadulterated state, and a mixed, and therefore impure, condition. The Cross stands between the full intention of God and something less than He intended. Yes, the Cross demands fulness, not imperfection, not something less even in degree. If the Cross really is a working power anywhere, it will never allow a standstill. It will always demand a going on, and ever on, because it opens the way for that.

The Cross stands between a knowledge or a wisdom that is without life, and spiritual knowledge which is life. Adam made his choice, his bid for knowledge, and he got it without life. The "tree of life" was shut up—he had knowledge without life. God does not stand for that. We know how even religious knowledge can be lifeless and dead! It may be true of us, that we have a lot of knowledge—but where is the commensurate life? The Lord is against that, and He says: I cannot go on; we must have some trouble about this; we must have some pain, some anguish about this—all the knowledge must have a corresponding life. The knowledge must be living, must be linked with life. You can eat of the 'tree of knowledge'—I mean that other tree of knowledge, the knowledge of the Lord, of heavenly things—but even so, you must have the "tree of life" to keep the balance. Knowledge and life correspond, go together. The Lord is against any state other than that.

Again, form, exact form, perfect form, in teaching and in practice, without power, is something that God will not allow. Teaching and practice may be perfectly right: yes, but what about the power? Israel had the oracles, had the Law, had all the truth, but where was the spiritual power? None at all. The Cross will act to put that right. There is

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nothing to be said against 'correct' procedure and accurate and sound teaching; they must be; but the Lord will see to it that by keeping things on the move, in exercise, in travail, in trouble, the whole question of power becomes a very real one. We have got so much teaching, but we have so little power—it must become an anguish, a real anguish. All that we have, and all our way of doing

things which we think to be so right, of New Testament order, must have a corresponding power and impact. And so the Lord will not allow rest in that.

In all these ways, He is the God of Hope: by travail there is hope; by despair there is hope. It is His way. May He give us understanding.

T. A-S.

RECOVERY OF THE GLORY

"And she named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel: because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father in law and her husband. And she said, The glory is departed from Israel; for the ark of God is taken." (1 Samuel iv. 21, 22).

"And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled 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 the Lord" (1 Kings viii. 10, 11).

ICHABOD! This dying widow spoke a good deal of truth when she lamented the glory that had gone, but she did not speak all the truth, for she could not foresee what would follow. The Ark of the Covenant was more than a material emblem: the Lord's Name and honour were associated with it. Israel had suffered a great loss, but the Lord was still well able to look after His own interests and act in jealousy for His own Name. The subsequent chapter relates His immediate reaction with regard to that Testimony and that Name.

JEALOUSY AND MERCY

If the Ark was taken into the house of Dagon, then so much the worse for Dagon. When God's people tried to make selfish use of the Ark, bringing it out to back them up in their conflict though their hearts were estranged from the God whose covenant it represented, they found that the Ark seemed powerless. It was as if God had no interest in it—did not care what happened to it. But when the Philistines presumed to take liberties with that same Ark, they found, to their cost, that it mattered very much to the Lord. Dagon, their god, was first humbled, then smashed to pieces, as the Ark was placed in his temple. And the Philistines concerned had no doubt about the supernatural power involved, for it left a lasting impression of awe upon them all. Jehovah is a jealous God, and He showed His ability to crush this would-be rival, Dagon.

If the men of Ashdod thought that they could trifle with Divine things, they, too, had to learn a painful lesson. "But the hand of the Lord was heavy upon them of Ashdod . . ." (1 Sam. v. 6), so that they soon took steps to get rid of this troublesome Ark. To Israel it seemed powerless, but to those in Ashdod who trifled with God's glory the power of Divine judgments was overwhelming. It may be, then, that some godly Israelites who heard of these events would take heart, in the realisation that God was still God, jealous in holiness for His great Name; so that, mingled with their regret at their own sin and failure, there would come the assurance that He would still take care of His own interests. His power was the same, even if His people had failed Him, 'He cannot fail, for He is God!'

The Lord is also great in mercy. Perhaps Ichabod's mother was so overcome by her own sorrow that she forgot that most precious part of the Ark, the Mercy Seat. The longsuffering and grace of God were represented in an integral part of that Ark of the Covenant. Even when His people had so badly failed Him, seeming to throw away all right to a further place in His purposes, recovery was still possible, because the holiness of God had also the accompaniment of the blood-stained Mercy Seat. 'God does not cast off His people whom He foreknew' (Rom. xi. 2). He is not only able to take care of His own interests but able also to bring back the glory to an undeserving people. Thank God for the Mercy Seat. The Ark came back, and more quickly than might have been thought possible. It needed no army, no rescuing party, no help at all from the Israelites. God made His presence felt in such a mighty way that those who held the Ark were glad to be rid of it, and themselves arranged for its return to Israel. 'Ichabod' was not the last word.

PRIESTLY INTERCESSION

When Phinehas' widow expired with the pronouncement of "Ichabod", she was overlooking

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the fact that God had already laid His hand on a man who would be the instrument for bringing back the glory. Samuel had lived in her house. He must have been always around, and she would know him and see him often. But he was so small and insignificant that she would never expect him to influence events. He was not even a priest. If the High Priest and his two sons had gone, then it must have seemed that there was no one left to take responsibility for the interests of the Lord. So we see Samuel set over against Ichabod. The Lord had already provided Himself with this instrument of recovery—so humble and small that men took no account of him, but so wholly given over to the will of God that he could provide that priestly intercession which Eli and his sons had failed to give. Here, then, is a further cause for wonder. Not only can the Lord look after His own interests, not only will He in mercy bring back the glory to His erring people, but even before the disaster He has provided Himself with the human instrument needed for the purpose. Eli's daughter-in-law knew nothing of this. The natural eye could see only tragedy—the tragedy of the departed glory. Ichabod.

What was the cause of Israel's tragic failure? In part, at least, it was due to the failure of the priesthood. We read in the story of the sad conditions in Eli's household, and we are told little about Eli himself to suggest that he exerted any spiritual influence for good in the whole situation. So it is plain that the priesthood of that day was gravely at fault. In reality, however, that breakdown was only the end of a long process, just the last stage in what had been wrong with the people of God for many years. When Joshua's days were finished, Israel passed into a period when there was no God-given leadership. Occasionally judges were raised up by the Lord, and for a time there was some semblance of order among the people, but it seldom lasted for very long.

Even more notable was the lack of priesthood. Only in the last chapters do we find mention of Levites, and then in the most depraved and lamentable connections. It would be a true comment on those times to say that there was no priest in Israel, just as much as there was no king. Even in the brighter days, when for a season leaders did arise, bringing relief and victory to a defeated people, even then there is no mention of this basic, essential, though often hidden, serving of the Lord's interests by a ministry of intercession. The reader passes from the unwholesome records of Judges into I Samuel (though with the inset of Ruth), only to find this ominous opening: "And the two sons

of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, priests unto the Lord, were there" (i. 3), which is soon followed by the further comment: "Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord" (ii. 12). 'Ichabod' indeed! It is always true that, when there is no vital ministry of intercession, then there is no glory.

This is the negative side. But it was not the end. Later the glory came back, and it came back in very great fulness—"the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord". As we have already said, this was due to the sovereignty of God, and also to the greatness of His grace. But it was also due to the fact that first a prayer ministry had been provided. Behind it all we find the figure of Samuel, God's priestly instrument.

It may be objected that the glory was a long time in coming back. It was. Samuel's was a long life, and he never lived to see that day. But patience is an important feature of priestly ministry—perseverance in faith and perseverance in waiting upon God. These were the secrets of a life which had such a tremendous influence on the whole course of the history of God's people; for surely it is no exaggeration to say that the man who contributed most to the recovery of the glory was Samuel. Samuel, the intercessor.

SAMUEL'S SIMPLICITY

If this is true, then it must be a profitable study to consider the essential traits which characterized Samuel. For many of us live under the shadow of Ichabod. We, too, feel, that the glory has departed. Although we could easily despair, there is with us also an inner conviction that the Lord's desire is to bring the glory back, once more to fill His spiritual House with His glory. There are many projects and suggestions that men may offer for the recovery of this departed glory. They may be right or they may be wrong, but they do not deal with the root cause or effect the radical cure. With us, as with Israel, the greatest need is for a mighty ministry of intercession—if necessary prolonged like Samuel's, if necessary to extend beyond our own lifetime as it did beyond his—but a ministry which will turn all the 'Ichabods' into 'Hallelujahs'.

The first thing to be noted with regard to Samuel is his simplicity. Samuel was not a priest. He had no official place in the priestly order. So far as we know he was never anointed by men nor ordained by them. It is true that his father was a Levite, but even so he does not seem to have been engaged in any Levitical work. People would have regarded

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him as a very ordinary boy in a very ordinary family.

Of course he was not this. One cannot class as ordinary a child who has such a miraculous entrance into the world as Samuel had. He himself was an answer to prayer. It would, indeed, perhaps be correct to say that this mighty ministry of intercession had its commencement with his mother, Hannah. This, then, was his beginning—God brought him in. And this is the way in which every true intercessory ministry begins: it is initiated by God Himself. This, surely, was what enabled Samuel to continue through all the long and testing years: this knowledge that it was no natural contrivance and no effort of his own, but an act of God which had brought him into being.

Even so, there was something very simple about this vessel of God's service. "The child was young" (i. 24). "But Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child" (ii. 18). "Moreover his mother made him a little robe" (ii. 19). All this seems to point to a homely insignificance, which meant that he was completely overlooked by Ichabod's mother. What could this feeble lad contribute to the recovery of the glory? This, however, is just the one who can serve God in the place of prayer, weak and despised in himself but mighty in intercession. He turned the tide for God. "The sin of the young men was very great . . . men abhorred the offering of the Lord. BUT SAMUEL ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod" (ii. 17, 18). Once again there is a Divine "But . . ." And it was a child in all his natural inadequacy who faced and stemmed the flood of evil and hopelessness. He stood his ground with the Lord, and in the end the glory came back. No one need be ashamed of their simplicity or insufficiency! It seems as though this was what the Lord was needing, someone small enough and humble enough to be usable. In Samuel He found just what He wanted.

SAMUEL'S TEACHABILITY

Furthermore Samuel was willing to be taught. His first uttered prayer, the introduction to a long and fruitful life of intercession in the secret place, was just the childlike request: "Speak; for thy servant heareth" (iii. 10). The secret of a true ministry of intercession is to have an open ear to the Lord. The first utterance must come from Him, not from us; our speaking to Him can only have value when it is preceded by His first speaking to us. Great stress is laid on Samuel's growing up, itself an important spiritual matter; and as he

grew it is stated that "the Lord appeared again in Shiloh: for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel . . ." (iii. 21). It is not said that prayer became mighty in Shiloh, or that Samuel broke through to God in prayer. No, the emphasis is on God's side; He revealed Himself again, because He had found a young man who, in spite of his youth, was ready to be shown the will of the Lord, and to maintain his first attitude of the bended knee and the listening ear.

And as he grew old he still retained that sensitiveness to the Lord. He mistook Jesse's eldest son for the man to be appointed king; he went so far as to conclude, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before him" (xvi. 6); but he did not act rashly. God was able to check him, to correct him, and to show him how not to exercise natural judgment—"as man seeth"—but to receive Divine guidance. What a contrast to the blind and set old man, Eli! It is a great mercy, and an indispensable condition for a fruitful prayer life, that a man should always have his heart attuned to the voice of the Spirit.

SAMUEL'S HEART PURITY

The third great secret of Samuel's power in the secret place was the unblemished purity of his life. Did his mother know the corrupt influences to which he would be subject among Eli's sons? If she did, she must have been a woman of remarkable faith, to commit her young lad to live in Shiloh, in those evil days. Her faith was vindicated. It is quite evident that Samuel was never tainted by the evil all around him. It was a miracle, to keep pure in that atmosphere, and God did the miracle. There can be no power without purity.

Later on in his life, when Samuel was dealing with the matter of Saul's appointment as king, he was able to issue an open challenge concerning his procedure from his youth until this advanced time when he was old and grey-headed, and with one accord the people testified to his integrity (xii. 1-5). If it was a miracle that the boy Samuel should be kept pure, how much greater was the miracle of maintained purity of spirit, during years when he could very easily have made some personal profit out of his position. It was this which gave him his unique standing before men as well as before God—he could claim to be free from impurity in his daily walk.

Saul's reign brought him nothing but sorrow. Yet, just as he had meekly accepted being set aside at Saul's appointment, so he remained with an unoffended spirit through all the heartbreak of that unhappy reign. He reproved Saul, but he still

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mourned and prayed for him. He allowed no bitterness of spirit, nor did he of his own choice seek an alternative. He returned to his place of quiet at Ramah, to continue his ministry of intercession, until, by the urging of the Lord, he went to Bethlehem to anoint David.

These, then, were the features of God's man of prayer—Simplicity, Teachability and Purity. And this was the man who brought back the glory and reversed the verdict of 'Ichabod'.

SAMUEL SPANNED THE GAP

There may be some who doubt whether Samuel did, in fact, play such a vital part in spanning this gap between the departure of the glory and the full recovery in Solomon's Temple. Apart from the actual narrative, there is an indication of what both God and men thought of the part he played, in the titles given to the two historical books which tell the story. Up to I Samuel xxv. 1, it can be argued

that Samuel was only one of the principal characters. Then he dies, and is no longer on the scene. Yet, in spite of that, both books are called by his name—First Samuel and Second Samuel—though originally, we are told, they were treated as one single book. Who gave the title of "Samuel"? We do not know. But it is singularly appropriate, as many have pointed out. It was Samuel's influence and Samuel's ministry, largely in the unseen realm, that reversed the tragic experience of 'Ichabod' and brought in the fulness of the glory. Where are the Samuels to-day? Surely they are as greatly needed in our day as he was in his.

When Saul turned against Samuel, we are told that the prophet returned to his home at Ramah (xv. 34). And Ramah, so they say, means 'heights'. Earlier on he had built an altar at Ramah (vii. 17). How much Israel owed, and how much David and Solomon owed, to this man whose home was in the heights by the altar!

H. F.

A TEST OF SPIRITUAL MEASURE

"We do well to bear in mind that it is in the maintenance of right relationships with our fellow-Christians that the depth and reality of such spiritual blessing as we may have received will be most truly measured and manifested. If we fail here, then we may be sure that there is something seriously defective in the blessing which we think we possess. It is sadly possible . . . to display much real zeal and capacity in the service of God, which, in His sight, are largely of no account, because we are not living and dealing with our fellows in a right spirit. We need the fulness and the renewing of the Holy Spirit in order to walk in love and forbearance towards our brethren, and it is the one who humbles himself as a little child who is really greatest in the kingdom of heaven, and who will be used to accomplish most in the extension of that kingdom."

D.E. Hoste
(Quoted in his Biography)

CONFERENCE IN SWITZERLAND

We have taken an hotel in AESCHI, near the Lake of Thun, for a conference in September (11th to 21st.).

Friends desiring to be with us are advised to let us know as soon as possible.

Write: *The Conference Secretary, 13, Honor Oak Road, London, S.E.23*

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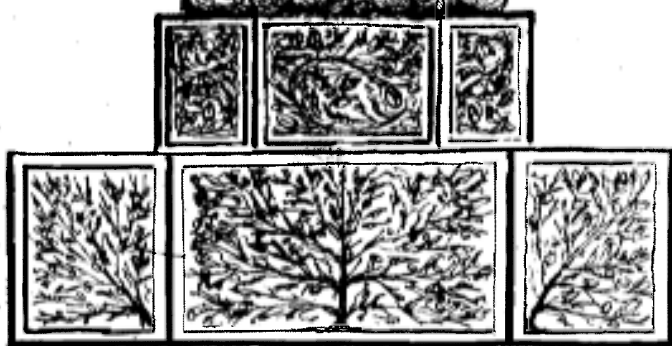
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September, 1959.

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 (literally—*full knowledge*) of the Son of God, unto a full-grown 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.



SEPTEMBER—OCTOBER, 1959.

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EDITORIAL

"I beheld the Lord always before my face" (Acts ii. 25).

THE last part of that quotation could rightly define the nature and object of the ministry of this little paper.

Not to propagate a teaching as such ; not to constitute a new community ; not to support a particular 'movement' ; but truly and solely to bring and keep the Lord Jesus in view in ever-growing fulness : that is its object. It seeks to be occupied with the far-reaching purpose of God concerning His Son, Jesus our Lord.

In this connection, and according to the above quotation from David, it is impressive and instructive to note what a great influence on life the matter of seeing, or beholding, has.

It can be truly said that a great deal of what we are, and therefore of the effect that we have in this world, is the result of our seeing. There is much truth in the saying that we become like that upon which our eyes are mainly focused. This can be seen in national characteristics. The arid, austere, hard, cold, and colourless regions of the world produce a hard, austere and matter-of-fact type of people. The colourful, verdant, soft, warm and fertile realms, where nature has not to be coerced but only guided, produce colourful and easy-going people with more artistic and sentimental natures. Small and restricted surroundings produce small minds, with limited interests and understanding. The dwellers in the spheres of far distances and massive dimensions are venturesome, bold, and generous, with enterprise almost audacious. This is a general rule with occasional and particular modifications or variations. It points to the effect on an individual or a community, consciously or unconsciously, of that which is continually before their eyes.

The Bible takes much account of this fact and carries it over to all its parallels in the spiritual life. Indeed, it puts every stage and phase of the Christian life upon the basis of seeing.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

The initiation or beginning of the Christian life is the result of 'beholding the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world' (John i. 29).

There were various objects of sacrifice in the great typological system in Israel, but the lamb was the centre of all. Their history as a nation began with the Passover lamb. They were ever and always reminded of that beginning by the yearly Passover. They looked upon the lamb as bearing their sin and judgment, although itself 'without spot or blemish', and knew that it was God's lamb pointed out and provided for them to look upon.

The New Testament brings the Lamb of God into view and calls for beholding. That word means more than 'take a look', 'glance your eyes toward Him'. It means, 'fasten your gaze upon Him'. It is the gaze of heed, of a quest; of desperation, if you will.

"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth" (Isaiah xlv. 22).

Then the Bible places upon the same basis the whole matter of our progressive transformation.

'Beholding . . . we are changed into the same image' (II Cor. iii. 18).

It is not an effort to form some mental picture of Jesus. In the Apostolic writings He is presented to us, and for us, from various vital standpoints, by the One who knows Him best and most fully.

In 'Romans', for instance, He is comprehensively presented as the essential righteousness of God provided where none can be found otherwise, but without which there is no hope at all for man or creation.

This is not an introduction to the books of the New Testament, but a pointer to Him and an indication as to how, as we are found looking at *Him*—not at the writers—an influence upon our character toward His likeness will follow.

What is true in principle regarding the beginning and the progress of the Christian life is also shown to be related to its consummation.

"Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; *for we shall see him even as he is*" (I John iii. 2).

There is more that shows that that final 'beholding' will have a consummating effect in putting the final touches to the work of 'conforming to His image'. So, from first to last, our salvation, transformation, and glorification are vitally related to our eyes, our spiritual seeing. 'The pure in heart shall see God' (Matt. v. 8).

But, when I set out to pen these lines, I had other things also in mind. Our eyes are so much confronted with conditions that are contrary to Christ, and this constitutes such a battle-ground for our eyes.

The Bible contains much that shows the deplorable results of the wrong use of the eyes. Think of Eve, of David, of the ten spies at Kadesh-barnea, of Samson (who saw a woman to his spiritual undoing, and eventually lost his physical eyes), and so on.

May it not be that much of that which is to be deplored in evangelical Christianity is due to this wrong use of the eyes? Our religious book-shops are furnished with the sour and bitter fruits of time and energy spent searching out and 'exposing' the weaknesses, flaws, or faults of so much that is otherwise of true value. This can become a predisposition, an obsession, a mania, and a menace.

We look at men, at people. We look at ministries. We look at Christian work, and in all we mark the human and faulty aspects. These become our foci, and the result is that the really valuable, and—perhaps—much fuller value, is eclipsed for us by the spot that has become everything to us.

Nothing has escaped this blighting use of the eyes, even that which has been most of God. We have known greatly used servants of God having their ministry cut off from thousands of believers just because of the focusing upon a deviation—or imagined deviation—in some *comparatively*

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small point, from common acceptance. The decline of ministry in some of our great conventions can be traced to this very thing. None would be more jealous for the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, than we are, but we are equally jealous that the standard of judgment should be—not tradition, or rigid systems of men, but—the measure of Christ.

Christ is the criterion, from first to last ; not the judgments of men. Do I—or rather *can* I—see the Lord, if I am really looking for Him? If so, that must be my focal point. If He is there, there is hope for the rest, and I must leave that with Him.

How easy it is to sing glibly: ' Turn your eyes upon Jesus ', and forget that it is always from ' the things of earth '.

" I beheld the Lord always before my face."

For the sake of everything precious to Him, may this be true of us!

EDITOR.

THE OCTAVE OF REDEMPTION

I. THE INCARNATION

AS we take up these meditations, let me utter a brief word of caution. We are not just embarking upon some ' line of truth '—a theme, a subject. The fact is that there is no ' truth ' apart from the Lord Jesus Himself, and the truth is *in* Him, not about Him. For the right apprehension, therefore, of the truth, a personal relationship with Himself in life is essential. We cannot know *the Truth* except by union with the Lord Jesus in a living way. That in turn demands the work of the Holy Spirit upon us and in us, and that means that we must be in a spiritual condition to understand and apprehend the truth, " even as truth is in Jesus " (Eph. iv. 21). Our life—all of our life—our hope, our salvation, our way, our assurance—our everything—is centred in *the Lord Jesus Himself*. It is not centred in some aspect or interpretation of the truth: it is centred in Himself. Everything, therefore, is resolved into a matter of knowing *Him*, of ' attaining unto the full knowledge of the Son of God ' (Eph. iv. 13); and the value of what the Lord may say to us in the ensuing pages will depend entirely upon our living relationship to Him, who *is* the Truth: the Sum of truth, and the Power of the truth.

INTRODUCTORY

We have called this series of studies ' The Octave of Redemption '. The word ' octave ' (from the Latin *octavus*) means ' eighth ', and in music it

means the interval between the first and last of the eight primary notes which complete the musical scale, since every *eighth* note repeats the first at a higher (or lower) level. We might equally well have taken as our title ' The Rainbow of Redemption ', for we have a very similar thought there, with the seven primary colours, and then number eight returning to number one. In such ' octaves ', we see one series, or phase, or movement, completed, and a new one commenced; the series of seven is never regarded as finished in itself—it must have the next to make the scale complete. We know, if we try it on an instrument, how necessary the ' eighth ' is—how incomplete seven is without eight.

This feature of ' seven plus one ' is peculiarly a mark of Christianity. Christianity is based upon the day after the Sabbath day, upon the eighth day which became the first day of the week. Judaism remains the religion of the seventh day: we know how incomplete it is, how it has stopped short and never gone on, never moved into taking the eighth day as the first. Christianity rests upon that eighth day which has become the first—the end of a phase of Divine work and the beginning of a new. The word ' Sabbath ', however, does not mean ' seventh '; it means ' rest '. Seven sees a completeness; eight means that God begins again upon something that has been completed. His new beginning is out from something finished—God proceeds from completion. That is Christianity:

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it rests upon something finished, and that something finished is God's rest, God's satisfaction. He begins everything from that point.

As you may know, the letters of the Hebrew alphabet are not only symbols for sounds, but also symbols for numerals; that is, each letter has a numerical value. And that is not only true of the Hebrew language. The name 'Jesus', in the Greek form, as used in the New Testament, has six letters, each letter having a numerical value; and when all those letters are put together with their numerical value they add up to 888. 'Jesus' = 888. I am not making a great deal of that, or trying to be fanciful, but I think it is impressive—I do not think that is an accident. He is the 'eighth day' Man, the One who has gone beyond, having perfected the work of redemption.

EIGHT ASPECTS OF REDEMPTION

Now, redemption may be said to have eight primary notes or aspects. There are, of course, many subsidiary features, but there are eight primary ones. These are:

1. The Incarnation
2. The Earthly Life
3. The Cross and Resurrection
4. The Forty Days after the Resurrection
5. The Ascension and the Glorifying
6. The Advent of the Holy Spirit
7. The Birth, Vocation and Completion of the Church
8. The Coming Again.

Into these everything else is gathered, and there is nothing outside of them; they complete the scale. You will notice that one and eight are the two comings. In principle, eight returns full circle to one: it is the coming of the Lord, representing two completions. The first coming, the Incarnation, was the completion of a phase: "The law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John i. 17); and it need not be emphasized that the coming again will be likewise the completion of a phase. But each is also the beginning of an entirely new phase. "The hour cometh, and now is . . .", said the Lord Jesus (John iv. 23), introducing that new phase, and we may indeed thank God that it will be true when He comes again.

One other small technical point by the way. The Hebrew word for 'seven' just means 'satisfaction' or 'completion'. We scarcely need comment upon that. God saw all things: they were "very good" (Gen. i. 31); and God rested in His satisfaction, in the completion of His work. But the Hebrew word

for 'eight' is again a very interesting word. It takes its rise from the root '*shammah*', which occurs in one of the names of the Lord, 'Jehovah-Shammah' (Ezek. xlvi. 35), meaning 'the Lord super-abundant', the all-sufficient One. So eight follows seven. Seven signifies completeness, and yet the Lord never stops there—He is super-abundant.

Now we shall approach each of these different aspects—these eight 'notes' in the 'scale' of redemption—with a question: the question 'Why?', and we apply it first to the Incarnation: *Why the Incarnation?* Why was it necessary that the Son of God should take human form and human nature?

WHY THE INCARNATION?

Of course, to answer that fully we should be under the obligation to consider the whole of the Divine thought and conception in the creation of man at all. Man's conception in the mind of God, man's vocation and man's destiny—this all represents a very great thing in the thought of God. But we have to allow that to come in at this point in order to lead us further. We might say—and rightly—that the Bible is all about God. That is true. We might go on to say that the Bible is all about God's interest in His Son, and that is quite true. But when you have taken full account of both these facts, you find that you cannot divorce either of these matters from man. The Bible is all about God—yes, but it is about God and His relationship to man, and man's relationship to Him. It is all about God's Son—and yet it is all about the concern of God's Son for man. When you have said everything, you arrive at man. We should not be interested in a remote God outside of the realm of human life. The truth is that everything has to focus down upon man, and we find that the Bible is the book of God's interest in man. Somehow God's interests are inexplicably bound up with man—his vocation and his destiny. All this and what it implies will be gathered into what we are going to say about the Incarnation.

Why the Incarnation? The answer is threefold. Firstly, for the redemption, or reclamation, of man. Secondly, for the reconstruction or re-constitution of man. And thirdly, for the perfecting and glorifying of man.

(1) FOR THE RECLAMATION OF MAN

Firstly, for the redemption or reclamation of man. The common idea about redemption is associated with the slave market—going into the slave market and buying out or buying back, redeeming, that

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which has been sold into it. There are, indeed, certain fragments of Scripture which lend themselves to that idea. "Sold under sin" (Rom. vii. 14) is a scriptural phrase, but we need some clarification of it. You say redemption means the 'buying out' of man from the slave market. He has been sold into some kind of slavery and bondage. True; but who sold him? Until you look into that question, and answer it, you have not really got to the meaning of redemption. Who sold him? *He sold himself!* That puts a new complexion upon things. We speak of a man 'selling himself to the Devil'. But how did he do it? Well, he did not sell himself objectively, like selling some chattel, some thing, some object, into another's possession. He sold himself subjectively—he sold himself in his *soul*. He actually sold his soul to the Devil.

But exactly what happened? Let us put it in this way. There was a day when someone knocked, and he opened the door: and that someone began to speak, and to speak treachery, under cover of beautiful language, and clothed in very appealing terms: and instead of slamming the door in the face of that visitor, he opened it a little wider and listened. Remember—that is always the first step to bondage, that is always the first movement towards a situation calling for redemption—listening to the Devil, and not immediately reacting with a question: Is this true of God, or is this false as to God? Is God a Person like that, or is He other than that? If every Christian would react like that to satanic suggestions and insinuations, what a different situation would obtain in many Christian lives! There are many in awful bondage because they have listened, they have opened the door; they have never confronted themselves with this question: Do you really believe that God is a God like that? Let me urge you to take that question to your present problem—situations and conditions, accusations and condemnations that the enemy is always trying to throw at you, in order to bring you into bondage—and say: Is God really like that?

THE ROOT SIN: UNBELIEF

When man opened the door of his soul and listened to the enemy, he opened himself to unbelief. And remember—unbelief is the root sin. Let us be quite clear about that. There may be motives behind, but the root sin is unbelief. It is the one thing that God will not have, the one thing that sets God back, holds Him off, makes Him non-committal. Whilst there is any unbelief, God stands back; so long as it persists, the gap grows. God will never commit Himself where there is unbelief. Does that

sound elementary? It is a thing that pursues us right to the end. This question of faith in God is the basis of all our education. Let it be said straight away that the measure in which God has ever committed Himself or will ever commit Himself is the measure of our faith in Him. When man opened the door to unbelief, Satan put his foot inside, right into man's soul, and has never taken it out. He has maintained that foothold in man's soul ever since. So that now the soul of man, as he is by nature, is linked with the evil powers, and the strength of that link is unbelief. Until that unbelief can be completely broken, shattered, the union between natural man and Satan continues.

Redemption or reclamation begins with faith: that is what we should call the simple Gospel. Faith is the very beginning of redemption. But faith is also the basis of continual redemption, continual recovery or reclamation. Redemption, while in Christ it is completed and perfect, is something that is going on: we are 'receiving the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls' (I Pet. i. 9). This matter is going on continually; it is progressive. While final in the work of Christ, it begins in us with the first exercise of faith—believing God—and proceeds upon that basis right to the end. How true it is that, when we fail to believe God, cease to believe God, have questions about God, we immediately come into some kind of bondage; Satan gets some hold, or has some gain. Immediately any doubt of the Lord comes in, we find ourselves at once locked up, and the only way out is a recovery of faith in God again.

Now, because of his unbelief, Adam brought about and established for the whole race a soul-link with the evil powers, and that is the nature of man's bondage. He is sold to another. That lays the foundation for the real, true meaning of redemption. Why the Incarnation? 'A final Adam to the fight and to the rescue came': another Man came to redeem man. But oh, we shall see as we go on that that was no mere objective activity—it was not just the things that He did. He was in His very *being* the Redeemer. Let me put that in another way: He *was* redemption. He not only *did* something, but He *was* that. This will become clearer later. But here we see the necessity for a Man of whom none of this is true coming to the rescue: a Man who, because of His non-implication personally in the entail of Adam's sin, has a clear and unique advantage. The Incarnation was to provide redemption for man *in* a Man, and not only for man *by* a Man. I hope you see the significance of that. It is a tremendous thing to see not only what Jesus *did*, but what He *was* to meet the situation.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

(2) FOR THE RE-CONSTITUTION OF MAN

By Adam's act, as we have seen, man became disordered in his very constitution, deranged, broken, another kind of being from what God had made him and intended him to be. He was robbed, and therefore deficient; deceived, and therefore defrauded. He lost what he had—his innocency. He lost what God meant him to have, and had already provided for him, on the basis of faith in Himself. He became a culpable being. Reading back with our Bible in our hand and the full revelation of Scripture, we are now able to see what man was intended to have. It all becomes clear now. He was intended for two things.

Firstly, he was intended to have the Spirit of God indwelling him. He was intended to be a temple of God. The whole Scripture now makes it perfectly clear that it was God's original intention that He should dwell in man, that the Spirit of God should be resident within. Secondly, it was intended that he should have within him what is now called in the New Testament "eternal life"—the life of the ages, Divine life, uncreated life. But he missed the intention of God in both respects. The Incarnation was for the express purpose of begetting a 'new-creation' man in which those two things could become actualities: man now indwelt by the Spirit of God; man possessing eternal life. That is the answer to the question: Why the Incarnation? And let me repeat that the Lord Jesus not only effected that as some accomplishment, or transaction, or work done: He was Himself the first of that order, to beget another race after that kind.

(3) FOR THE PERFECTING AND GLORIFYING OF MAN

And finally, the perfecting and the glorifying of man. Of course, these two things are clearly seen in Jesus, the Son of Man. Some of the more serious things of the Word of God are said in this connection. "Though he was a Son, yet learned [he] obedience by the things which he suffered" (Heb. v. 8). He was made "perfect through sufferings" (Heb. ii. 10). We will not stop with the theology or the doctrine of that. We can focus it down to the one word which we have used and underlined already. How was He *perfected*, or *completed*?

I think, in faith. He had, as man, accepted voluntarily a basis of faith—to live His life on the principle of faith in God, His Father. And it was concerning that that every trial and testing and ordeal had its meaning—if by any means the enemy

could entrap the last Adam, as he had the first. He had succeeded with the first race on one point only, and that point was unbelief. So successful a manoeuvre could lead him to believe that there was no better. 'That is the thing that does it—that is the point upon which to focus', we can almost hear him say. It opens up the life of the Lord Jesus very much more fully and clearly to recognise that the focal point of all His trials, testings, satanic assaults, every imaginable thing that was working contrary to Him—and we have not got the whole story, by any means—had as its one object the insinuation of some question about His Father. The enemy knew that the devastation of a new creation could be brought about on that one thing. And he knows it to-day, with you and with me.

Then, the Son of Man was made perfect through *sufferings*. In what way? what were His sufferings? I do not mean His physical sufferings. His physical sufferings were but the ways and means by which the enemy was trying to get at His soul. The real suffering that the Son of God, the Son of Man, knew, was this constant, nagging pressure and assault from every angle, the unceasing efforts of the enemy to get in between Himself and His Father. That was the essence of His supreme agony when He cried: 'Thou hast forsaken me!' I do not believe, and I am sure you do not believe, that His cry in the garden—"If it be possible, let this cup pass from me"—was the cry of a man who was not prepared to die even the kind of death that He was facing. That kind of thing has, of course, given rise to an utterly false doctrine and theology. Jesus knew what He had to face in being made sin: He knew that the ultimate, dire issue lay in that moment when the Father's face would be turned away, and He would be left, like the scape-goat out in the wilderness, alone, alone, alone—God-forsaken in that one awful moment. That was the point of His suffering, and that was the sum of His suffering.

But through it all, through all the sufferings, He was made perfect—perfect in faith. What meaning that gives to such words as these, so familiar to us, and used so lightly: "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me" (Gal. ii. 20, A. V.). What a faith to live by! If only that faith could be transmitted to us—if only that faith could be in us in the power of the Holy Spirit! Then we should get through all right. "I live by the faith of the Son of God"—tested, tried, assailed to the last degree, and triumphant. I am glad that the end of the story was not on the note of God-forsakenness, but on the note of triumph: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." It is all over—it is

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victory! That is faith perfected through suffering, and made complete by obedience—for obedience is always faith's proof. There is no such thing as faith without obedience.

WHY THE TRANSFIGURATION ?

At this point we might put in an extra question : Why the transfiguration? The transfiguration represented the end of *His own* course, the end of *His own* road. He had travelled the road of testing and trying, the road of utterness of consecration to His Father. So far as He personally was concerned, He had no further to go. He had been obedient—that was the end of the road for Him. Hence glory could come in then. For Him there is glory—the transfiguration: a Man who has gone all the way with God in faith's obedience has been glorified. But as for the rest, that is for us—that is our part in it. He came out of that glory, and, 'instead of that joy set before Him, He endured the Cross' (Heb. xii. 2). He took our place, in order to bring us to His place—to glory—"many sons to glory" (Heb. ii. 10), and He was thereby made "perfect through sufferings." A Man glorified, through faith, for man—nothing apart from us.

His glorification, as we shall see later, is a part of the redemption. It is a part of the re-constitution, it is the issue of all ; and therefore, since the redemption and the re-constitution are *for us* in Christ, the glorifying is for us in Him also. 'Glorified together with Him' (Rom. viii. 17). He was able to say at the last: 'Father, I have glorified thee upon the earth'; and therefore He could also say: "Father, glorify thou me . . . with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John xvii. 4, 5). The point is that here on this earth the Lord Jesus lived a life of faith, and was as utterly dependent upon God for everything as you or I are. His was as utterly a life of faith as ever you and I are called upon to live. And on that basis, as man, He went through in such complete satisfaction to God that He could be glorified. But remember, the Incarnation was not for Himself: it was for us, and all that was bound up with the Incarnation is for us. It is *our* redemption, *our* re-constitution and *our* glorification through perfecting in Him.

WHAT CHRIST IS FOR US

Now, all this lays the foundation for believing—it is a pity we have not got the exact translation—'believing *on to*, or *into*, the Lord Jesus'. Just

to say: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ", is weak ; it leaves much to be desired. This is positional: it indicates a change of position, a movement: 'Believe *on to* the Lord Jesus Christ.' It really means this: that there is in true faith something that makes Him, so to speak, into ourselves, and ourselves into Him. Do not misunderstand me : I am not talking about Deity—I am talking about the Son of Man. There is something of deep spiritual significance in that word at the Lord's Table: "My body, which is *for you*". Leaving out the extreme and wrong ideas associated with transubstantiation, and all that, behind it there is something left for the dispensation to recognise, until He come again. Behind it there is this principle: that faith's appropriation of the Lord Jesus makes good in us what He is. We are redeemed through faith in Him. We are re-constituted through faith in Him. We are perfected through faith in Him. We are glorified through faith in Him. But it is not just objective—it is a matter of our taking the position that all that is true of Him is true of Him *for us*.

How impossible it is to explain! But you and I have got to learn what it really means to take our stand, in faith, on the ground of what Jesus Christ is—because then something happens. Our troubles arise out of standing upon the ground of what *we* are, or upon appearances or arguments—something objective—instead of taking our position upon the ground that the Son of God became incarnate, not only to work out, but Himself to *be*, my redemption. And by faith on Him there *is* redemption. He came to *be* my re-constitution: and, by faith on Him, through the action of the Holy Spirit, something happens, and I am re-constituted. He came to *be* my perfection: and through faith on Him the Holy Spirit takes up the work of my perfecting. He came to *be* my glorification: and faith gives the Holy Spirit His requisite, essential, indispensable ground for bringing us also to the glory of Christ, to be glorified together with Him.

Until we believe, and believe *on to* the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit stands back. You may perhaps deceive yourself, but you cannot deceive the Holy Spirit. You cannot have one foot on one ground and one foot on another. If you have got one foot on what you are, and the other foot—you think—on what Christ is, you are a divided person. The Holy Spirit does not commit Himself: He stands back and waits. He says, Put both feet on Christ, and then I will begin to do something.

T. A-S.

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LEARNING TO STAND

"And he made the boards for the tabernacle of acacia wood, standing up" (Exodus xxxvi. 20).

"And Elisha said, As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand . . ." (1 Kings xviii. 15).

"And they stood every man in his place round about the camp" (Judges vii. 21).

"Behold, bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord, which by night stand in the house of the Lord" (Psalm cxxxiv. 1).

THE Tabernacle represents the totality of the people of God, the sum of them in their life together in Christ. The individual parts of that structure had no meaning if they were separated from the rest. On the other hand, the whole could never have existed but for the contribution made by each part. This Tabernacle was a moveable erection: it did not remain in one place, and so it had to be constructed in such a way that it could be taken down and re-built at will. Thus the secret strength of the structure was in the acacia wood boards—normally invisible—and in their ability to stand up.

WHAT GOD BUILDS WITH

There were four outer coverings, masking the whole building and forming it into a tent. When these were removed there remained three walls and the necessary curtains. When the curtains were taken away, a skeleton building was revealed, which consisted of rows of upright boards joined together by various horizontal bars. In the course of dismantling, the time would come when the four visible bars would be taken away, and finally the invisible connecting bar would have to be removed. This was an important moment, for, contrary to what might have been expected, the walls did not collapse even though all the connections were taken away. These boards were made to stand up by themselves. They did not need to be propped up, nor did they lean upon one another. Presumably the moment came when all but one had been removed, and stacked ready for the journey: but, right up to this last moment, and even if there was only one board remaining, it was still steady and erect. In that moment, when all that could be seen of the House of God was one single board, the board was standing. "He made the tabernacle of boards of acacia wood, standing up."

Such an uncovering would expose the hidden secret of this building. Reduced to its absolute

minimum, it consisted of a board which even if isolated and abandoned would remain standing up. This is God's minimum, and it represents an essential feature of all His building. He demands individuals who have learned how to stand. In Elijah's day, God's plans were realised because, when everybody else seemed to have collapsed, there was the prophet who could claim to be different: ". . . the Lord of hosts . . . before whom I stand". At the critical moment of Gideon's assault on the Midianite host, the victory was made possible because his faithful few kept firm in their appointed places: ". . . they stood every man in his place . . ." And in the great days of the kingdom, God's interests were served not only by the more visible and obvious functions of the many servants of the king, but also by those who were strong to maintain worship through the hours of darkness: ". . . which by night stand in the house of the Lord." As we have said, God must have individual servants who have learned to stand.

THE WORK OF PREPARATION

Each of these boards of course had a history. In the first place it was a history of severance. It had stood before, but in that previous experience it had stood by virtue of its own roots and in its own life. But when it was a tree it had no place or part in the building of God. Our natural life and natural strength are useless in spiritual things. In the case of the tree, nature had to be dealt with, severely and indeed ruthlessly. First the tree was felled: it was cut away from its own roots, deprived of its natural resources, and no longer allowed to follow its own development or exist for its own display. Then the cutting process had to continue, while the wood was being reduced, whittled down and shaped, until it was suitable for the Divine purpose.

This is the work which the Cross must do in the life of every believer who will really stand for something in the purposes of the Lord. There is no escaping it, and no alternative to it. Between us and the board, however, there is this difference, that, whereas, in the case of the board, the work is done once for all, being finished as a preliminary act of preparation, in our case the same work of reduction and cutting has to be continued. Our value to the Lord depends on our willingness to cooperate with Him all the time in the cutting away and removing of what we are in ourselves to make us what we should be in Christ.

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There is always a positive side to the work of the Cross. The Lord has to deal drastically with our natural life only because He plans to conform us to His own Divine standard. For these were standard boards; every one of them had to be of exactly the same shape and size. There is a standard for us. It is the measure of Christ. This does not consist in any outward uniformity—far from it—but in an inward likeness to Christ. The point is emphasized still more in what followed, for when the cutting, shaping and smoothing of the board was finished, there still remained the task of completely covering it with pure gold. It is only Christ's nature, true Christ-likeness, which can be built into God's House. The original acacia tree may have had a certain value or beauty of its own, but this had little or no connection with the value and beauty of its ultimate destination. None but the initiated could recognise the original rough tree in its final transformation into a golden board. All this indicates something of the wonder of Christ's work of redemption, and encourages us to believe in His ability to transform us into the image of His Son. "He made the boards . . .", and He will make and re-make us, if we are prepared to put ourselves into His hands and allow Him to do the work.

THE SILVER SOCKETS

We have mentioned how the acacia wood had lost its original roots, but we must not think of it as rootless. The boards were not balanced precariously in the sand. They would not have kept standing for long if they had been. No, the Lord does not take away natural supports and strength from us in order to leave us tottering in some state of vague instability. Let us look again at the boards to discover the secret of their being able to stand so firmly.

For each board there were provided two silver sockets. It was not that a solid bar of silver was placed the whole length of the wall, but each board had its own sockets, two of them. The typical meaning of silver is redemption, and the individual sockets seem to emphasize how each believer must have a personal experience of Christ's redeeming work. It was not really the board which stood firm, but the silver sockets. These provided a sure foundation, a double security. The boards had tenons, which means that they were so shaped as to have their own means of penetrating the sockets, appropriating them, as it were, and rooting themselves in them.

Amid the many truths associated with redemp-

tion, we need to be reminded that the silver speaks of the purchase price. It is as though the silver sockets gave their double testimony to this, saying that the board is not its own, nor does it belong to anybody else; it has been purchased for the Lord's special possession. This, at least, is the power to maintain each one of us in a strong standing position. By Christ's redemption we have been bought back to God. We are not our own. We can make no decisions, pursue no ends, serve no purposes which are merely personal. We are not our own—we are His. We must stand true to this relationship. We do not belong to anyone or anything else. Here is the cause of much weakness, the explanation of much vacillating. Believers are seeking to stand in the shifting sand of men's approval or ideas. And they cannot stand. The only firm basis for remaining unmoved by all around us is to be firmly gripped by the silver sockets of Christ's redemption.

THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION

And so we come to the application of this symbolism. It is quite simple, but very challenging. What it amounts to is this: Supposing all accomplishments and supports to our Christian life were taken away, even the God-given blessings of fellowship in Christ, would we remain like the final, solitary board, still standing up? If the whole fabric of our related life were taken, as it were, to pieces, and all the outward aids to strength and unity removed, what would happen to us?

Of course the Lord already knows the answer to that question. He does not have to bring about such conditions, nor to dismantle the rest of the structure. He can see through into the hidden secrets, and knows whether each board is indeed standing firmly in the power of redemption. Nevertheless much is allowed to happen to us in order to reveal our true position.

Are we, in fact, leaning on others? Well, circumstances will arise to make that clear. The others will be taken from us, or for some reason or other we shall either lose their support or lose our own confidence in them. It may be that we find them after all unreliable. It may be that there are grave shortcomings on their side. Things may come to light which disillusion us. Or misunderstandings may arise to make things seem all wrong. It is not for us to discuss such trials and sorrows: our simple point being that in all this the test is being applied to us as to whether after all we were leaning boards or standing up.

It is one of the dangers of strong, vital fellowship among believers, that such fellowship may

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subtly take the place of reliance on the Lord. We may be so convinced that we belong to one another as to forget that first of all we belong to Him; we stand in a personal grip of His redemption. Now those boards were rightly joined to one another. The connecting bars seem to indicate the various God-given provisions which are meant to hold us strongly together. It would be foolish and sinful for us to contradict the Spirit's instructions in the Word as to the practice of a life of fellowship. We need one another. We grow and serve God effectually as we obey the principles of related life. Yet still it is true that the hidden value and strength of the whole structure of the House of God depends on the firm and upright stability of each individual member.

NOT LYING DOWN

Outwardly there may be much to weaken, much to discourage. The Lord knows all about that. But however much this is true it does not excuse us from standing firmly in our place with the Lord. We may be cut down, shaped and prepared, measured up to the standard and covered with gold, and yet we may be lying down under the adverse conditions which surround us. And if we are lying down instead of standing up, then we are failing the Lord. This is what the Devil is always trying to do with us. If he cannot prevent our sanctification and transformation of life, he can still spoil our usefulness by laying us low when we ought to be standing upright.

Elijah affirmed that he stood before the Lord of hosts. Yet the time came when he allowed himself to be knocked over. Even he lay down under the juniper tree in self pity and despair. And what

was the reason? Largely because everybody else who belonged to the Lord was lying down too. He looked around and could see no one standing up to the tremendous assaults upon God's people. He saw nothing to support him. Outwardly there was nothing. His complaint to the Lord was that he alone was left to stand for the Lord in Israel. "I, even I only, am left" (I Kings xix. 10). This was not true, as the Lord was careful to point out. It never is as bad as that, though we sometimes think that it is. But *even if it were*—this is the point—even if it were, that is still no excuse for our capitulation. Even if only one board is left, that board should be standing firmly in its own silver sockets. "He made the boards . . . standing up."

Elijah was no use to the Lord until he got up on to his feet again. And nor are we. Moreover if we are capable of being so prostrated, then underneath the apparent unity and seeming strength there must be a hidden weakness or contradiction. The Lord does not have to dismantle His House to discover the true spiritual state of each individual board. It may be that He allows some open failure among His people because He knew all the time that the good appearance had no true foundation in fact. With Him it is a matter of prime importance that the individual believer should stand personally in the strength of the Lord.

We have not been dealing with the subject of building, but only with the conditions which are necessary for the building. There are many other factors to be considered if we wish to know how the Lord is seeking to build us together in His House. These we must learn and put into practice. But the first and fundamental lesson is for the individual to maintain his own spiritual stand in Christ. We must learn to stand, and to stand up.

H. F.

RESURRECTION—A LIVING PERSONAL REALITY

"And the sons of the prophets said unto Elisha. Behold now, the place where we dwell before thee is too strait for us. Let us go, we pray thee, unto Jordan, and take thence every man a beam, and let us make a place there, where we may dwell. And he answered, Go ye. And one said, Be content, I pray thee, and go with thy servants. And he answered, I will go. So he went with them. And when they came to Jordan, they cut down wood. But as one was felling a beam, the axe-head fell into the water: and he cried, and said, Alas, my master! for it was borrowed. And the man of God said, Where fell it? And he shewed him the place. And he cut down a stick, and cast it in thither, and the

iron did swim. And he said, Take it up to thee. So he put out his hand, and took it" (II Kings vi. 1-7).

I confess that I used to wonder why this story was included in the number which we have of these acts of Elisha. What is its lesson? what has it to say? In thinking about it, several things have become clear to me, and I would like to pass on just one or two of them.

THE PORTION OF THE FIRSTBORN

Of course, this, with all the other things that are recorded about the acts of Elisha, is included in

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the great beginning of his life. You recall that his master, Elijah, as he was about to be taken up into Heaven, asked Elisha what he might give him. Elisha said: "A double portion of thy spirit". This was, of course, the portion of the firstborn (Deut. xxi. 17). Elijah said: 'You have asked a hard thing; nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken up, it shall be.' And as they went on, the other side of the Jordan, the chariots of the Lord appeared and caught up Elijah; and Elisha cried: "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof!" And the mantle fell from Elijah, and Elisha took it up. The sons of the prophets, who come into view in this chapter, and are mentioned so many times in this book, cried: "The spirit of Elijah doth rest upon Elisha", and they bowed themselves to the ground. (I Kings ii. 9-15).

Now that is where it all begins, for these various 'mighty works', or 'works of power', were the expression and outcome of that mighty anointing with the Spirit, that portion of the firstborn. So that what we have here in every one, and in this one of which we are thinking, is the real work of the anointing—that is, of the Holy Spirit operating in the power of resurrection. Every incident bears that stamp in one way or another.

It would be easy to show how this is but a foreshadowing of the ascension, or receiving up, of the Lord Jesus, whereupon the Holy Spirit descended on the Church; the 'mantle' of the firstborn, the portion of the firstborn, fell upon the Church. If we want to know what the 'portion of the firstborn' is, it is just this—the power of His resurrection.

'THE SONS OF THE PROPHETS'

Let us then come to this story. The 'sons of the prophets' are again in view. Note what they represent: they represent the next generation, the generation succeeding, following on, to carry forward the prophetic testimony. They are the *sons* of the prophets. The heart of this whole thing, where they appear again and again in relation to these mighty acts of the Spirit through Elisha, is this: that these, called 'sons of the prophets', who were in the 'schools of the prophets', being educated and trained to carry on the work of the prophets, to fulfil their ministry in the next generation, were not just academic students; they were being brought, by these various ways, into closest touch with reality. You will at once see how true that was in the case of this man and the axe-head.

These 'sons of the prophets' expressed quite

a legitimate desire when they said, "The place where we dwell . . . is too strait for us", and suggested building an extension. It was a perfectly legitimate thought; a right thing; nothing wrong with it at all. To desire to escape from straitness and limitation, to enlarge, to expand, for the work of the Lord: that is a good thing and a right thing. And so Elisha raised no objection, put no difficulty in the way, but encouraged. And when some of them said to him, 'Look here, we are not going on with this without you; we are not discarding the old generation; you come with us; we need you'—he said, 'I come.' There was a towardness in this whole matter, and rightly so. But even so, with a perfectly legitimate desire and ambition, a right quest, to which there is no objection at all, the thing has got to be kept very close to life; and that is what this story is about. Among the various lessons that it teaches, there are just two that I will point out here.

THE NEED FOR FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCE

Firstly, that in our going on, or our desire to go on, in our quest for enlargement and increase, and escape from anything that is small, narrow, straitened and limited, all that is employed in the work of the Lord must be first-hand. It cannot be done with borrowed tools. Now there are many ways in which the testimony can be second-hand. For example, children brought up in a Christian home. There was such an occasion in our own midst not many years ago. When a very dear brother was suddenly taken home to the Lord, one of his sons passed into a very difficult phase, and he came to see me. He said: 'I am having a very difficult time: I have discovered that I have been living on my father's testimony. I have just taken what he said, followed him, thinking that I was on the same ground as he; but I have discovered that it was his, and not mine, and now I have got to find it all for myself right from the beginning.' It was a difficult passage; he came through, of course, and is now on his own ground. It was a 'borrowed axe'.

Again, we may get it from our meeting, the teaching that we have received over years. We think we have got it in our hand, and then we imagine that we are going to use it in some way, that it is going to be a serviceable thing; and then something happens, and we find it does not work; the head comes off! It just comes off and lets us down. It was not ours; alas, it was a 'borrowed' one. It was someone else's—the 'fellowship's', or

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the meeting's, or the teacher's. In various other ways, too, it can be something borrowed—from the study and the library and the bookshelves, the commentaries and the translations, and all the authorities and godly men who have written them—and we think we have got it! And then it does not work—the head comes off! 'Alas, it was borrowed.'

Now these incidents, these accidents—which are no accidents at all—where the whole thing seems to let us down, where it does not seem as though it is working, are allowed by the Lord to happen. A crisis arises, such as arose with this young man and his axe, in order that the thing should pass through death on to resurrection ground, and become ours in the power of resurrection. When the whole head has come off, and we are left with just the haft in our hand, which will not hew down any trees at all, will not accomplish anything: when we are left like that, standing, it is a painful time, a painful experience. We feel, perhaps, that we have been on the wrong road; we have been in some kind of illusion. Well, maybe. But the Lord is very faithful; and such experiences, which seem to be like disaster, and we cry, Alas, alas!—those experiences are in His very faithfulness, to bring that thing on to new ground, where it is ours by a miracle of God: it is ours because the power of His resurrection has come in. And when that has come in, there is no longer a question of a 'borrowed one'—it is yours.

Now, whilst the faithfulness of God sometimes necessitates on the one side the loss of the axe-head, leaving us standing, crying, 'Alas!'; all our power to do things has flown, has gone; we are stranded: on the other side, there is always the positive purpose of God in such experiences, that we shall know this portion of the firstborn. The portion of the firstborn secures the inheritance to the individual concerned. It is not something bought, paid for, earned, but a gift of grace. It is knowing the anointing in truth.

We will all agree, at least in theory, with the statement that we do not want borrowed experiences, or teaching; secondhand addresses, studied up things. We want people who *know*, and can speak out of a deep experience; who have been through the depth of Jordan. They have been into death, and have come on to resurrection ground. They know, on the one side, the bitterness of loss, of failure, of disappointment; on the other side, the wonderful strength of this miracle of resurrection life. We want 'sons of the prophets' who are in the good of the anointing, not just students of it. Everything has got to be established

on the ground of a living, personal experience; not somebody else's, but our own.

That is the first lesson. It is simple, but it explains much, I think, concerning the Lord's ways with us.

RESURRECTION REVERSES NATURE

The other thing, which goes with it quite clearly, is that in this miracle of resurrection there was a complete and perfect reversal of the natural order. It is the nature of a piece of iron to sink: that is its nature; it will sink. For a lump of iron, an axe-head, to float, is contrary to nature. Now, by nature, we are all bits of iron. By nature, we are of the sinking kind! We know that. It needs little to push us under, to put us down: it is in us, and especially when there is some spiritual demand on hand. Here was the whole matter of enlargement, of expansion and increase in the work of the Lord. I wonder if you have noticed, whenever something more of the Lord is in view, how quickly we get down, we get pressed under. It just happens. When there is something of the Lord impending, you find people 'under' things: they have gone down; they have been caught in some way, and they have sunk. We really have to gird ourselves for anything that the Lord is going to do. *That does not just 'happen'!*

Well, we are made like that; naturally we are of the 'sinking' kind. Perhaps you may think that you are a very buoyant person! I venture to suggest that the most buoyant person, with the most optimistic natural temperament, coming right up against the forces that are set against the things of God, will find that they need more than natural buoyancy. We shall never swim, float, stay on top, without something more than our own strength of nature, our own constitution.

But the wonder of the anointing, the wonder of the Holy Spirit, the wonder of the portion of the firstborn, is this: that, although we are made of such sinkable stuff, although our natural tendency is to decline, to drop down under pressure or trial, the marvel is that you and I are afloat to-day! That is truly a marvellous thing. Perhaps you know that. Perhaps many times you think that you have sunk; but you are afloat to-day. Your heart may be sinking to-day, but you are not drowned yet; you are not at the bottom yet; you are not lost for good yet. We have all been there many times. We can say, with the prophet: "When I fall, I shall arise" (Mic. vii. 8). There is some extra factor in the child of God, in the servant of God, called according to His purpose, that causes us to survive

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a thousand drownings. If the Holy Spirit is in us, there is a reversal of the way of nature. Nature declines; nature goes down; nature sinks; but the Spirit is always reversing that, and causing us to rise, to go on, again and again. There is something in us that is different from our own nature: it is the Divine nature—the power of His resurrection. The power of His resurrection is a wonderful thing!

So, the message of this simple story is, first of all, that we must be on true ground. Everything must be true and real, not borrowed and second-hand; we can do nothing really effective with tools that are not, as it were, a part of our own being, wrought into our own experience. We must be able to say, 'Now this truly is mine! I have been through death with this; this has brought me into life. *This is mine.* It is not something that I have heard, not something that I have got from someone else; I have this because I have gone through

it with God on this matter.' It must be like that in order to carry on the prophetic testimony.

Secondly, it gives us this great assurance, this wonderful assurance, that we have the Holy Spirit: if we are the Lord's we have the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelling in us. And that is something, not only more than nature, but contrary to nature. Though oft-times we may feel we are going to the bottom, or have indeed touched bottom, we shall come up again if the Holy Spirit is in us. The Holy Spirit is not going to die in the grave! "If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth *in you*, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall quicken also your mortal body through His Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. viii. 11). Our body of death will be quickened by the power of His resurrection. 'And the iron—the *iron*—did swim.'

T. A. S.

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

THE LOST PENNY

WHEN little Bertram Wiseman was in trouble he usually cried for his mother, for after all he was still very young. He was certainly in trouble this time. He had forced his hand down into a vase, and he could not get it out again. The vase was a costly one, perhaps the most valuable article in the Wiseman home; and, although he was small, Bertram knew very well that he ought not to be playing with it. Still, he cried for his mother, and when she came she did not scold him, for the one matter of importance was to get his hand free from the vase.

The little boy had not been able to get it out, and now, though his mother tried her hardest, she too met with no success. In the end she had to call Mr. Wiseman to see if he could do any better. He pushed and pulled, but all to no effect. He got hotter and hotter, telling Bertram to try first this way and then the other, but although it was clear that the lad really wanted to do what his father told him, it was also clear that he was stuck quite fast. Then Mrs. Wiseman caught hold of the vase, while Mr. Wiseman put his hands on Bertram's shoulders and used all his might to pull him backwards. He pulled him back all right, but he also pulled the vase with Mrs. Wiseman holding on to it, for there was still no moving of Bertram's hand. It seemed to be as fixed as ever.

At last the mother and father began to talk of having to break the vase in order to free their boy's hand. Naturally they did not wish to do this,

for it was old and of great value. Poor Bertram's mother was most unhappy to think that their precious ornament must be spoilt. She begged her husband to save it if he possibly could. But how could he? Their son's hand had to be set free. He could not pull his own hand out; and in spite of all the efforts which had been made, there seemed no chance now that anybody could do it for him.

Mr. Wiseman said that they must all keep cool. He wondered if Bertram could not press his hand together and make it smaller. So he quietly talked to his frightened little boy, showing him how the hand could be narrowed by both stretching it out and squeezing it in at the same time. 'Look at my hand', said his father, 'and then try to do the same with yours.' 'But I can't', replied the child, 'I can't do that with *my* hand!' 'Why not?' asked his father. 'Of course I can't', objected Bertram, 'for if I do, I shall drop my penny again.' 'Your penny! What penny?' Mr. Wiseman asked, and then, bit by bit, Bertram began to tell him the whole story. He had taken down the vase from its place, and while playing with it, he had let fall his Saturday penny which had dropped inside. The penny lay at the bottom of the vase. Although it had a narrow neck, Bertram had managed to force his hand down into it, but now he found that he could not get it out again. He was holding on to his treasure. It meant a lot to him, and he did not wish to lose it. Had he not gone to the trouble of pushing his

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hand down into the vase especially to rescue it? It was easy for his father to twist or squeeze his own hand, for he had nothing in it, but Bertram could not do the same with his, as he wanted above all to hold on to his precious penny.

'You must let go of the penny at once', Mr. Wiseman ordered; but then, seeing the dismay in little Bertram's face, he added, 'If you let it go, I promise that you will get it back again.' Rather doubtfully, but trusting his father who always kept his promises, Bertram let go of the coin. It fell to the bottom of the vase. This time it did not need much struggling to get free, for his hand, no longer clenched to grip the coin, yielded to the pressure of the narrow neck and slipped slowly through. It did not take Mr. Wiseman long to tip the vase upside down, shake out the penny and restore it to the surprised Bertram.

Now, although he did not understand it at the time, the boy had been learning one of the most important lessons of the Christian life, which is that when we hold on to things we cannot have them, but when we let them go, then they become truly ours. The vase was safe; his hand was free; and in it was firmly grasped his little treasure which

had been the cause of all the trouble. He had got it back by letting it go.

The Lord Jesus has given us the most wonderful example of 'letting go'. In His case it was not some petty treasure which He could have held on to, but His own glory as the eternal Son of God. We are told that "He did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself . . ." (Philippians 2. 6, 7, Revised Standard Version). For the sake of the Father's will, and in order to become our Saviour, He was willing to let go of all His heavenly treasure, to empty Himself, to live in humility here on the earth and then to die on the Cross.

We are so glad to know that He has received back all that He let go, and much more. He has not lost anything. He has greatly gained, for now He has ". . . the name which is above every name" (Philippians 2. 9). We are told to follow His example. If we keep hold of what is ours, we shall become prisoners to it, as Bertram did. But if, like him, we obey the command to let go, we shall become truly free. And not only shall we be free, but we shall also discover how wonderfully God, our Father, can give us back all that we had seemed to lose.

H. F.

MEN WHOSE EYES HAVE SEEN THE KING

I. EYEWITNESSES OF HIS GLORY

Reading: Matthew xvii. 1 - 21.

"For we did not follow cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: and this voice we ourselves heard come out of heaven, when we were with him in the holy mount. And we have the word of prophecy made more sure; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts" (II Peter i. 16 - 19).

THAT little clause in the hymn by M. E. Gates that we often sing might be the title of our present meditations—'men whose eyes have seen the King'. Men whose eyes have seen the King! As we, in that hymn, pray the Lord to send such men, I am sure we all feel deeply and strongly that that is the great need of our time. The world needs such

men; the Church needs them; and at all times when the Lord has had such men, and has sent them forth, the need has been met—His need and the need of others.

I think it is the 'seeing of the King' that really sums up this whole matter of the Transfiguration. That is why the Lord took the three leaders from the twelve up the mountain, in order that presently, with that vision made alive with meaning and power by the Holy Spirit, they might go forth as men who had seen the King. And what happened? We are living to-day in the ever-growing value of that vision.

THE SETTING
OF THE TRANSFIGURATION

The very setting in the Word, in both of the places in which the Transfiguration is referred to, as we have read, is significant and helpful. As you know, three of the four Gospels—Matthew, Mark and Luke—record this matter of the Transfigura-

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tion, indicating, surely, that with these men this matter was of some particular importance. If John did not actually record the event, I am not sure that he passed it over, or did not have it in mind. We may come to that as we go on. But you will recall that, at the time of the Transfiguration, things were becoming increasingly difficult for the Lord. The growing hostility in all directions was pressing Him in, weighing heavily upon His spirit, and making His ministry more and more difficult, more and more limited. The shadow of the Cross was lengthening on His path. It is of this very matter that He now speaks frankly to His disciples for the first time: He speaks frankly about the Cross. The atmosphere was just charged with a sense of pending crisis—something is going to happen. It was at that time, in those conditions, that He took three from the twelve into the mountain apart, and was transfigured before them. It had a great relatedness to the situation which was developing.

In the case of the many years later, when Peter wrote about the Transfiguration, we know from his letters something of the situation. He begins his first letter by addressing himself to the saints 'scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia'—*scattered* saints. Perhaps you know what it means to be of the 'scattered' people of the Lord, in distant places, in lonely places; distance and loneliness creating their own problems and heart-aches. How things seem to ease up when we are together! There is such a sense of fellowship, a sense of life and of joy, when we are all together. These saints had perhaps known something of the great 'togetherness' of Jerusalem or elsewhere, but were now scattered, with all that that means.

Peter goes on to speak to them about the 'trial of their faith'—'the trial of your faith is more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried in the fire' (I. i. 7). These scattered saints were knowing something of the 'fire' of tried faith. There is much more in his letters indicating a not too helpful situation for the people of God. The key-note to his letters is 'grace'; they needed to know grace. There was opposition; there was persecution; there were false prophets, false teachers. And, in that situation, Peter wrote and introduced this matter of the transfiguration.

This is significant. There is something for the people of God in this great matter in days of difficulty and adversity: indeed, what they and we all need at such times is a new vision of the King. That, amongst other things, is what the Lord Jesus meant for that little band of men. The three were commanded to say nothing about it for the time

being, until He was risen from the dead. Someone has used his imagination in that connection, as to how difficult it was for these three men to hold their tongues, and say nothing about it, even to the others; but then, when He was risen, how gladly and eagerly they told the others and everybody of this wonderful experience. It goes to the heart of everything. If this is true—that is, if the Transfiguration was true—then anything and everything in the Bible can be true. If it was not true, then we can doubt everything. *But it was true!*

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TRANSFIGURATION

You are aware that the Transfiguration marked the turning-point in the mission of the Lord Jesus on this earth. He had gone to the farthest point of His travels north; from that outermost rim of His ministrations, He would immediately turn about, with face to the south—to Jerusalem, and to the Cross. A resolute, purposeful, meaningful decision was reached on the mount; it was a crisis, a turning-point. We might say that it represented the very heart of His time here on this earth, if we could see it. But what did it mean so far as He was concerned?

(1) HUMANITY PERFECTED

I think it meant two things in one. It certainly represented and set forth the absolute perfecting of His humanity. Here He has reached the point of His own personal perfecting as a Man. This glorifying, this transfiguring, was Heaven's testimony to His utter and perfect sinlessness as a Man: that in all respects, whether of Hell's assaults and temptations and subtleties and efforts, or men's hatred, malice, trickery and what not, He had triumphed, completely triumphed. If we were to analyse it, we should have to look at the word *sin*. But we can say this, that the sum of sin, from the beginning in the garden to the end, is *unfaithfulness to God*—a breach of fellowship with God through mistrust. That is the very core of sin. Everything was concentrated upon Him, from every realm, if by some means, in some way, a breach could be made between Him and God. That would be sin.

But in His case it never happened. He met it all and triumphed. The first Adam failed, and all his seed have been involved—but here is a Man perfected. Humanity that God intended is here achieved and realised, and is therefore glorified. So far as He was concerned, that was the first meaning: Sin, with all its horrible entail, has been com-

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pletely defeated in and by this Man ; and therefore death must go. There can be no death, for death is the result of sin. If Adam had never sinned, he would never have died. This One never sinned : He could not die—He could only be glorified!

(2) THE RETURN OF HIS GLORY

There is another aspect as to its meaning to Him. I think it is quite clear that the Lord Jesus carried in His heart a great longing and a prayer for the glory that He once had. This is where I think John touches this matter very closely. In the seventeenth chapter of his gospel, he records that great prayer of the Lord Jesus: 'Father, glorify Thou Me with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was' (v. 5). That opens a window and lets us see that the Lord Jesus had a consciousness of His eternal glory past: He carried it with Him; He knew about it—marvellous thought!—and that the consciousness of that former glory was ever prompting Him to pray toward, long toward, the day when He would return to it and it would return to Him. 'Father, glorify Thou Me with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.'

The Mount of Transfiguration had become an answer to His heart's prayer and cry and longing—at least a touch of it. A fleeting touch, but for Him it was one of those things which perhaps you know a little about in your Christian life. The Lord just does something—it passes, but you know by it that you have been heard; you know that there is sympathy in the Father's heart for your need and situation. It may only last for a day, or a night, for an hour, or for a little while, and then pass, because the end of the road is not yet; the eternal glory has not yet come; but the touch by the way is something that carries us on. We know the Lord has heard; we know the Lord has taken account of that inner cry and longing, and has given us a token of His sympathy. It was like that with the Lord Jesus—the answer to His own cry.

(3) THE OFFSET TO THE CROSS

Now, it is here that the Lord Jesus introduces, in a direct, frank way, the matter of His Cross. If there had been any hints before, the apostles and their representative, Peter, were completely oblivious of those hints; but now, at this time, the Lord Jesus comes to the matter quite positively, quite deliberately. Peter rises up as the spokesman of the others, in rebellion; he will not have it. But here it is. The Transfiguration was to be the offset to the Cross for these men, at the time when they should

come to realise that the Cross was not (as they were then thinking it would be) the end of everything: shame and failure; reproach, dishonour, and despair. When they should come to see that the Cross was just the opposite of all those things, then the Transfiguration would take a new place, and they would see, as Peter says in his letter.

If you will read back in his first letter, you will hear Peter saying this: "The prophets sought and searched diligently . . . what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them" (i. 10, 11). Peter has got it right now; he has got it round the right way. First, when he would repudiate the sufferings, he is all for the glory—he is putting that first. The disciples were after the glory and were not going to have any of the sufferings; the Cross was something they would not hear about or accept. Glory, yes, but not the suffering. He has got it round the right way now: 'the sufferings, and the glory that should follow'.

Is that what Moses and Elijah were talking to the Lord Jesus about on the Mount?—'the exodus that He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem—the suffering and the glory? The Transfiguration was the great offset to the suffering, to the Cross; and it was intended not only for the Lord Himself. It was intended for these leaders amongst His servants, that they should have the ground laid, the foundation put down, upon which presently the Holy Spirit would alight for seeing that not only the Cross of Calvary, but all its outworking, were in the light of the glory, had in view the glory at the end. These sufferings were toward the glory. They came to see that later.

You and I need that message. The message of the Transfiguration at this particular point is this: It is not now all 'transfiguration'; there is a lot that is of the plain and of the valley; there is the Cross. You notice that the Lord Jesus, in speaking of the Cross, said: 'He that would save his life shall lose it'. There is much of that to be gone through and experienced. But this is saying that all that—the Cross, His Cross, and the outworking of His Cross in the experience of His own servants—is unto this glorious end, that they shall be glorified together with Him.

THE ISSUE OF THE TRANSFIGURATION

We have to look for the issue of it in the incident that immediately followed, as they came down from the mountain. It is full of truth; too full for exhausting at this time. They came down, and are

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met by this distracted father—distracted over his boy, whom (in the original language) he calls ‘my only begotten son’; his one boy. There are many emotional elements bound up with it, of course, which we can leave. But here is this father with his boy, distressed over the situation, and disappointed over the nine representatives of the Lord Jesus, the majority of His disciples whom He had left down below. He describes what is the matter with the boy, what happens to him, and tells the Lord that, although he had brought the boy to His disciples, they could not help him or do anything about it.

(1) AN IMPOTENT CHURCH

Here, surely, in the Holy Spirit’s thought in giving these details, is the suggestion of an impotent church in the presence of this demon-driven humanity on the plain. It is representative of a condition in this world and in humanity. Would it be going too far to say that the description of this boy’s trouble and how it affected him can be seen in counterpart in the world to-day? The world is under the domination of a power with which it cannot cope; a driving force, driving toward destruction; always driving toward self-destruction. It cannot help it; it is mastered by an evil power in this universe, driving, dominating, frustrating every effort; and in this scene of humanity’s helplessness and need, a Church that does not know what to do with it, unable to cope.

That situation can be found in ten thousand things. We are all up against situations with which we cannot cope. Perhaps in your assembly, perhaps in your own family, perhaps in your own self, you meet with forces that are too much, driving; and it is always in the direction of self-destruction, of evil, of harm, of hurt, of injury; toward the fire and the water, to destroy and to quench. That is a good description of the evil work of the evil one in human life, and we have this small representation of it in this boy. Without indulging in unworthy criticism, and taking account of all the noble sacrifice and service and labour and toil of the servants of the Lord, we have, nevertheless, to say that the Lord’s people, very largely and in a great many things, are impotent in the presence of these forces. The evil powers are holding the ground; they are defeating and defying every effort.

It is quite patent that those nine disciples had made an effort. ‘Why could not we cast it out?’ They had evidently tried and failed. Their effort and labour was for nought, and the enemy was laughing at them, holding his ground, while no doubt the critical world around was very pleased

that these disciples were such poor expressions of their Lord, letting Him down like this.

What is the issue of the Transfiguration? Surely it is this, that there must be brought upon these situations an impact of the exalted and glorified Christ. It is a question of *impact*! When I use that word, I am quite sure you will say, Yes, that is what we need: that is what the Church needs; that is what local companies need; that is what I need in my own life—an impact upon situations, upon places. This is what happened later, did it not? These men who had come to understand the meaning of the Transfiguration; these men whose eyes had seen the King—Jesus, perfected, glorified, exalted, attested by Heaven—men who had seen Him thus, went everywhere; and what an impact! Rarely, if ever, did they fail to register on this earth, in the kingdom of Satan.

(2) THE IMPACT OF THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD JESUS

And do you notice how Peter describes this? “We were eye-witnesses of his majesty”—His *majesty*. Is not the need for the impact of the *majesty* of the Lord Jesus upon this earth? It should be. Again, he says: “We made known unto you the power and presence of our Lord Jesus Christ . . .” I am sorry they have not translated that word thus; they have put ‘coming’. Of course, the word is very frequently related to the coming again of the Lord Jesus, but the word itself cannot be isolated to that. The same word is used of the apostles, when they *came* into a situation. It is the same word, whether the ‘coming’ or the ‘presence’. And Peter describes this as the “power and presence” of His *majesty*. Yes, that is the issue. The power, not as abstract and unrelated, but the power of His presence in His majesty—that is the holy mount; that is the high place; that is what the world needs.

Let me use the word again—‘impact’! If it should be ours to see the King in His glory; if it should be ours to catch a fresh glimpse of the glorified Lord, that is going to answer the cry and the need for *impact*. And conversely: there will never be an impact until we have seen Him as the glorified Lord. He is the answer to every need, and a vision of Him as exalted and attested by Heaven will bring new impact into our lives, into our ministries, into our churches, upon situations. Does not your heart cry, as mine does, Oh for a recovery of the Church’s impact upon this world! And this is none other than the impact of the *majesty of the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ*.

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Now, we know that that is how it will be when this word is actually fulfilled by His appearing at the end. When He comes, He will 'smite the earth with the rod of His mouth' (Isa. xi. 4). The brightness of His presence will be devastating to evil. There is no doubt about it that when that presencing, that '*parousia*', takes place, there will be an impact. We cry for that; we pray for that. But the word is used not only of that, but in other connections, on different occasions. The same word, exactly the same word, as is used for the coming again of the Lord Jesus, is used of apostles coming into a situation, or being present there. It is used of the Lord Jesus too in this motional sense. He *came*, in that sense, on the mount of transfiguration; it was His *presencing* in glory. Again and again He *presenced* Himself, and every time there was impact—all pointing to His final great *presencing* in glory. It is interesting, is it not, that Peter uses for the event on the mount of transfiguration exactly the same word as he uses for the coming again of the Lord at the end—the *presence of the Lord*.

THE PRESENT NEED

All these are statements with which I imagine you will agree, both as to the significance and as to the issue. But we need an anticipation of the day of His coming, in the Church to-day—now. We need something of the meaning of that final impact *now*—His presence in majesty and in power. What about it? One of the writers who recorded this event tells us that Jesus went up into the mountain to pray; 'and as He prayed the fashion of His countenance was changed' (Luke ix. 29). And when He came down, the key which He used for that desperate situation was the key of prayer: 'This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting' (Mark ix. 29). What are we to pray for? What is to be the burden of our prayer in relation to this matter of impact, recovered power? If you have any sense of this poor world's distracted condition, and desperate need, you will not control your praying; you will not regulate your praying; you will not make prayer a legal system of 'you must', 'thou shalt . . .', and so on. If you are touched, as the Lord was touched, with this situation and this need, be it in an individual, or in a company, or in the world, or in the whole Church, the only thing that you will do—but you will do it—is pray.

And what will you pray for? What is it that will answer the need, the situation; what will touch it?

Now here is the point of departure. We feel the need; we are aware of the situation here and there, in this one and that, in this place and that; and of

course, we do pray to the Lord and ask Him to do something about it; we do that, I trust I am not saying a wrong thing when I say that too often it is like the effort of the nine—nothing happens! The thing goes on, persists and defies you. You see, the need is not for that kind of prayer. What is needed is the kind of prayer that brings in the majesty and the power of Jesus Christ; that is born out of a mighty apprehension of His glory, of who He is, what He has done, where He is, and what He is doing now. That is what we need to recover.

About that we have much more to say. But—let us recognise it, face it, and acknowledge it—what is needed is this: the secret of bringing the majesty of the Lord into a situation; putting that power upon it. It is executive; it is dynamic; it is something which registers, and the thing is done. Do you not agree with me that that secret is what we need? And for that, I repeat, we need a new, mighty mastery, in our inner being, of the greatness of the Lord Jesus. We all agree that He is great; we will sing 'How great Thou art!'; we will not reserve or trim our words about the Lord Jesus in glory; but there is a gap between that and this situation. That is the tragedy and that is the problem and the perplexity of it. *He* is like *that*, and yet *this* is like *this*, and the two things are not brought together.

Why did He take those three up? Not simply because He had a heart that longed for human fellowship. No! He knew who they were; He knew their future; He knew the position that Peter was going to take, and He knew the ministry that John was going to fulfil, right on beyond the lifetime of all the others. He took them there with Him with this one object, I believe, in view: that, in those coming days, when they would meet these situations on this earth, in this world, they should be in possession of the secret of His majesty, and that they should be a link between Him in glory, and this situation of shame and evil.

Is not that the vocation of the Church?—to be His link between Heaven and earth; to be the instrument of the registration of His Kingdom upon the kingdom of Satan? Is not that what we are called for? If that is not it, I do not know what we are for. And if we fail in that, we can do ten thousand things, and still the enemy will laugh at us. With all our efforts and expenditure, he still holds the ground so terribly. Oh, for men whose eyes have seen the King! To have done so means a tremendous thing in the life of such men. That we shall see. But here is the preparation of the way.

Before we begin to pray over situations, let us pray for a new vision of the majesty and glory of

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the Lord Jesus, and then nothing will be impossible. I believe that is what was in the thought of the Lord when He said: 'If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed . . .' It is not merely psycho-

logical make-believe. If only you have grasped the smallest meaning of His majesty, anything is possible; it is so great!

T. A-S.

SHEW THE HOUSE

Readings: Ezekiel xl. 1 - 4; xliii. 1 - 7.

"Thou, son of man, shew the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities: and let them measure the pattern" (Ezek. xliii. 10).

IT is only when the reader reaches this fortieth chapter of Ezekiel's prophecies that he begins to understand the true objective of that prophet's ministry. So much of that which goes before is in the nature of warning and condemnation. The warnings were no idle threats. The judgment had fallen on Jerusalem. After this the prophet was able to proclaim the Divine purpose of it all. He saw the new building of God and was commanded to declare it to God's people.

A THRONE PEOPLE

The book opens with Ezekiel's first vision, the vision which was to govern all the rest. He tells us that what he saw was "the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord". This vision and this glory focused in a Man, or rather in The Man, the Man upon the Throne. Many years passed, years full of meaning both for the people and for the prophet. Then Ezekiel had a further vision of the same glory: but this time the central feature was a House and a City. The spiritual emphasis had now passed from the individual Man to the Corporate Man, from the Throne Man to the Throne People. The purposes of God demand the Throne Man. And in Christ all those requirements are fully met. But in and through that Man the purposes of God also require a people. This redeemed people is known as His House (Hebrews iii. 6).

Ezekiel's first vision portrays heavenly life and energy: so, while it may be full of rich and wonderful symbolism, it is not at the moment expressed in practical terms. It is good for us to note, as Ezekiel did, that God has all the heavenly knowledge and energy needed to establish His throne "far above all". We can do nothing until we are fully convinced of His absolute ability. The subsequent vision, however, seems to stress the fact that there is meant to be a very practical outworking of those heavenly activities. God is always

practical, and so must we be. It is not enough for us to be enraptured with the truth that His King, our Lord Jesus, is on the Throne; we must know how that affects His people—what it means, or ought to mean, in their experience. This, then, seems to be the purpose of these later visions, to show the House as the place of God's Throne here on the earth; a Throne People, a people of whom it may be said, "This is the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell . . ." (xliii. 7).

EFFECTS OF THE VISION

The effect which the vision has on us will probably disclose whether or not we have seen what the Lord intended us to see. If we interpret the purpose of God in terms of men's activities, making it a matter of teaching, of schemes and enterprises, we shall find that the so-called vision tends to make us conceited. That is the kind of knowledge which puffs up. If we see what God meant His House to be in terms of 'things' we shall probably become critical of all around us, and set to work to produce the 'thing' prematurely and in our own strength. ". . . Shew the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed . . ." If it is a real vision of the glory of God which dawns upon us, then it will certainly humble us to the dust. This always was, and always is, the effect of meeting Christ in His glory. And the Church is not a matter of things and procedures, but of a Person. The Church is Christ in all His fulness, expressing Himself in His redeemed people. The people of God are only as they should be when Christ is everything. The House of God only has meaning when every part of it speaks of Christ.

The Gospels tell us of people who got some glimpse of the true nature of Christ. The first effect on them was amazement; they were overwhelmed with adoring wonder. This was followed by deep humbling; His very presence made them deeply ashamed of themselves. And then the wonder and shame gave place to hope. Christ gave them new prospects and inspiration. The shame of which the Lord speaks is not meant to be a shame of despair, but of contrition, of wondering and adoring hope.

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This is how we are meant to see the vision. "That they may be ashamed". Whenever we come into contact with that which in some real measure expresses the glory of the presence of God among His people, it brings both wonder and deep humbling; it makes us aware of our own shortcomings. Israel was God's House. This was *themselves*, or rather what they were supposed to be, that they were seeing. This was what God had planned and purposed should be fulfilled in them: they were called to be the Throne People by His redeeming grace. They had failed the Lord; failed Him seriously and tragically; they had come short of His glory. Surely, if we get any truly spiritual insight into the Divine intention, that His people should be filled with the glory of His Son; if we have any understanding of what He means His House to be, we too will be filled with shame at our great failure and shortcoming. There is a hint of the reason for Israel's abysmal failure in the constantly repeated phrase which everywhere marks the earlier chapters: "Then shall they know that I am the Lord". This appears some sixty-two times in the first thirty-nine chapters. The implication seems to be that things had gone so wrong just because the people lacked a true knowledge of the Lord. All failure, all coming short of the glory, is essentially a result of insufficient knowledge of the Lord. And for His people that is something of which to be greatly ashamed.

It was not only shortcomings of which they ought to be ashamed, but positive contradictions. We must read the earlier chapters, and also the parallel denunciations of Jeremiah, to realise the measure of their shame. This was a people of a high calling, a people among whom God dwelt in His glory, through whom He planned to manifest that glory to the whole world. Their privileges were so great; their actual behaviour so base. They not only came short of the glory—they obscured it with their own shame. We must remember that every spiritual privilege which we have carries with it the peril of contradiction in our lives. There are young Christians, those who may have only a limited knowledge of spiritual things, but who obey the light they have and live consistently with what they know, and all can perceive that their lives are transformed with the glory of God. And there are much more mature Christians, who pride themselves on being well informed as to spiritual matters, but who have not experienced a corresponding growth in likeness to Christ; and alas! little glory can be seen in them. So let us not be complacent about the vision. Let us not take it for granted that we *are* what we know. It may be that we are

among those who ought to be greatly ashamed.

From such a humbling, a new work of God is possible. There is yet hope. "If they be ashamed"—if only that response can be obtained from them—"If they be ashamed . . . make them to know the form and the fashion, and the goings out and the comings in . . ." "You can get on with your ministry", says the Lord to Ezekiel, 'if they are ashamed.' That was why Ezekiel had to show the people the real thing. This is the only way of bringing conviction. It is not our job to go around telling everybody where they are wrong; to spend our time condemning this and that, to be finding fault with God's people. That will not help them at all; indeed, it may do the very opposite. We must show them the real thing. God needs His people to be a Throne People, a place for the soles of His feet. We cannot move around setting up such 'places', but we can and ought to display, in our own life together, something of the reality of the glory of Christ in the midst. This alone will bring true conviction and new hope. Whenever we see the real thing we feel ashamed of ourselves.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE VISION

It is impossible for us to give any detailed explanation of the vast and complicated vision which Ezekiel describes. The most we can hope to do is to extract a few of the more obvious spiritual implications of the vision.

Firstly, the vision means nothing if it is not a vision of Christ. All who study the Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple are agreed that every detail speaks of Christ. A material, a colour, a measurement—they all speak of Christ. In the same way the Church has no meaning apart from Christ. The vision is not Christ *plus* something extra, but always and only Christ. This vision was given to Ezekiel on the top of a very high mountain. We are reminded of another high mountain, the Mount of Transfiguration, where the three apostles saw the glory of God concentrated in His Son. Ezekiel's vision represented the same glory in the same Son, but now expressed in a vast number of members, and so portrayed as a House and a City. But this House has no meaning apart from Christ. Every part must be judged by the question: Does this express something of Christ? Has this a meaning in relation to Christ? If not, it is rejected. If not, then however good or reasonable it may seem, it must not be given a place. This simple but most searching test must be applied to our whole life—"the form and the fashion, and the goings out and the comings in . . ." How radiant, attractive and

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effective can the smallest group be if Christ is given His true place among them!

Then the vision means nothing unless there is the river of life flowing out from it. This is the message of chapter xlvii. The House is set in the midst of a dying and thirsty world, and it is set there in order that, by means of its outflow, thirst may be quenched and death swallowed up by life. This vision would mean nothing if it were shut up to itself. One of its great functions is to provide the outflow, or better still the overflow, of Divine life and blessing to a needy world. This was the most miraculous river in history. With no tributaries, and beginning only as a mere trickle from under a door, it yet transformed the sea of death itself. Only a vision! we may say. Yes, but a vision that is meant to bring upon us shame that we have not known its reality, and hope that we may do so.

Further, the vision has no meaning unless it brings all God's people into their inheritance. For this we must read chapter xlviii, which describes the inheritance of the whole people of God. They are all there. And the descriptions are different from anything previously recorded. Whatever this may mean in terms of prophecy, it surely has as its first message a spiritual indication that God's House is the key to the bringing in of all His people to their inheritance. The chapter takes no notice of geography, and no notice of history; it just states: 'From east to west' (vv. 1-7). 'East to West': surely that is a phrase which the Bible uses to express the infinite. There is indeed an infinitely great inheritance for all God's people, but the secret of its realisation is this central purpose of a Throne People.

There was a time when the only concern of Saul of Tarsus, in spiritual attainment, was to outstrip everybody else; to go one better than the others and then look down on them. That was before he had his vision of Christ. From then onwards his one desire was to be so true to the Lord as to help his brethren, to be so after for Christ that in some way all the Lord's people should benefit from his utterness. This is true to our present vision. We do not help our fellow-believers by compromising or lowering the Divine standard; we help them by pressing on to a higher realm in Christ, so that we may inspire them to "follow on to know the Lord" (Hos. vi. 3).

Finally this vision gives indications of that "exceeding abundantly above" of which Paul spoke, when he wrote to the Ephesians on this very subject of a Throne People. The dimensions are all larger than any other dimensions given to the Tabernacle or the Temple. The whole area is enormous.

And the whole area is the Holiest of All—"the limit thereof round about shall be *most holy*" (xliii. 12). There used to be a small part of the whole which was most holy; then the holy place, and then the rest. Now, however, we are presented with something so superlatively of God that the whole House is one great Holy of Holies. The implications of this vision are that God has not abandoned His purpose of a Throne People. When Ezekiel saw the glory departing, he was probably cast into despair. We often are. It is as though the Lord came back to him, and to us through him, to assure us that He means to realise His end, and that He can do it in us.

THE BASIS OF THE VISION

We must note that nowhere was it suggested that Ezekiel should construct this House. In Exodus the Lord said: "Let them *make me . . .*" (Ex. xxv. 8); it therefore follows that the vision given to Moses was intended as instruction for the actual builders of the Tabernacle. When revelation was later given to David, it was intended as the Spirit's pattern for Solomon to undertake the task of building the Temple (I Chron. xxviii. 11-21). In Ezekiel's case, however, there was a solemn call to give attention to what was already made, and to submit to it. 'To this intent art thou brought here . . . to hear with thine ears . . . to behold with thine eyes, and to set thine heart upon all that I shall show thee' (xl. 4). ". . . That they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them" (xliii. 11). We are not called upon to construct the Church, but to conform to it. There is a spiritual reality in Christ of corporate life and love; God is seeking to make it known to us, so that in humbleness of heart we may conform to it.

Furthermore, it is to be noted that Ezekiel had no vision—indeed he had no real message—until Jerusalem had been destroyed. For a time Ezekiel was dumb. And we must observe that it does not disprove a man's Divine calling if for a time he is silent. Indeed his silence may be a proof that he is truly governed by the Spirit, as Ezekiel certainly was. He only spoke when God opened his mouth. The time factor is clearly shown. It was when the news came through that Jerusalem had finally fallen (xxxiii. 21). So long as people clung to a hope of the survival of the old, God had nothing to say to them. For the whole basis of the Spirit's work is that it is done on resurrection ground. The old thing, contaminated by man's failure, subjected to man's wisdom and held in the carnal grip of man—this must die. Only when that death is really

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effective can the Spirit be free to release His mighty energies for the fulfilling of the vision.

This is something which must be fully accepted. Ezekiel, who was always a sign to the people, had to undergo an experience which illustrated it. He was warned by the Lord that his wife would die suddenly. "I spake unto the people in the morning; and at even my wife died" (xxiv. 18). How often personal and domestic affairs play a vital part in a man's ministry! But the main point was not the loss, but the fact that Ezekiel was forbidden to mourn over it; so implying that God's people must accept the passing of the old order without question. There must be no looking back. It might be something highly treasured, like Ezekiel's wife,

who was so dear to him as to be described as the desire of his eyes. Still it must go. God's new work can only be on resurrection ground. The disappointment and loss, the painful working of the Cross where we most feel it: all this is essential if we are to come into line with the Spirit's work of filling all things with God's glory. Such loss may seem to be a contradiction of the vision, but in fact it provides the very basis for its realisation. Resurrection ground is the only safe ground; and moreover it is the ground of fulness.

The last word is spoken in Ezekiel xlvi. 35: it is a new Name for the Lord—"Jehovah Shammah". This is the secret of the House which we are first to see and then to show: "The Lord is there".

H. F.

"THE SAINTS IN CAESAR'S HOUSEHOLD"

Philippians iv. 22.

ALTOGETHER apart from any lessons to be drawn from this statement, it is one which is most intriguing and provocative of interesting speculation. Already in this same letter the Apostle has referred to his bonds being manifest throughout the whole Praetorium. This was the place of Caesar's bodyguard. Evidently through his contact with the soldiers their report of him was well known among the thousand Lifeguardsmen of the Emperor. Then they, in turn, were in close touch with the Emperor's household, and, whether they were or were not Paul's converts, there were "saints", believers *there*, and somehow Paul had close touch with them, although he lived in "his own hired house". Was this through believing soldiers, or did those saints run all risks in visiting him? It is all so full of suggestion and wonder.

But our purpose in referring to it is to catch the significance of the phrase as a statement, and to obtain from it some guidance and comfort. "Saints in Caesar's household." There was the place of positive paganism and of ruthless antagonism to Christianity! There was the place where everything was against Christ and all that represented Him. How could these people allow themselves to be employed and sustained there? How could they give their lives, their strength and faithful service to this system and its ruler so false to Christ? What about the "unequal yoke"?

How many young believers have come up against such a problem and question. How many have decided matters by concluding that it was all wrong to do such a thing, and so they have left their work and sought only to serve and take wages where all

was, at least, not antagonistic to Christianity. In doing this many have made terrible difficulties for themselves and have got into an entirely false position. And if it should be said that the saints referred to were probably slaves and had no option, this is only begging the question, for martyrdom should not be shunned if being false to Christ is involved in our position. And yet there seems to be no such inconsistency hinted at here. The Apostle just makes a statement as though it was a thing taken for granted that there could be "saints in Caesar's household". Well, let us also assume that such a thing can be. Let us not raise questions where Paul does not do so. But let us see what governs such a position.

Putting aside the mental question, the ghost of legalism, let us ask whether ever a saint has lived a triumphant life in a sphere so inimical to Christ, and whether the Lord has ever had saints being maintained in such a system. We shall be hard put to it to prove that it has not been so. The points which govern this matter are: Is it impossible to live in fellowship with Christ there? May not the Lord want a testimony in such a place? Is it really a matter of an *inward* controversy with the Lord which completely arrests our spiritual growth, or is it something that has been put to us in a legalistic way by others? *Is it to our interest to stay there, or only to the Lord's?* Did not the presence of those saints in Caesar's household speak of the very sovereignty and Lordship of Christ over Caesar himself? For while, perhaps, upstairs Caesar was thinking hard and cruel thoughts about, and planning destructive measures against, the Christians in

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his empire far afield, some of them were downstairs cooking his dinner. The Lord can outwit Caesar and laugh at him. Those saints were there as evidence that Jesus is Lord, even in Caesar's household.

Don't leave Caesar's household until you are sure that it is no longer possible to be a Christian there. But don't let it be just negative—see to it that the justification for your being there is that you are a positive answer to Caesar's challenge to Christ!

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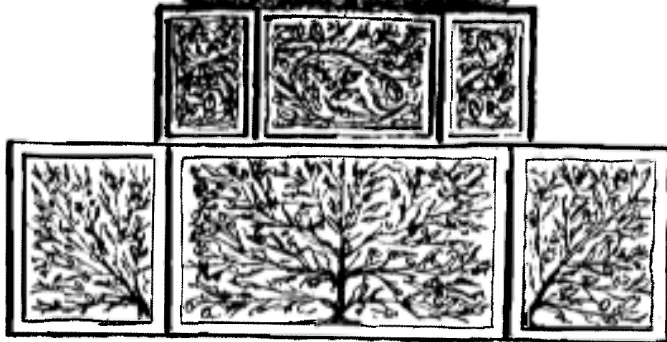
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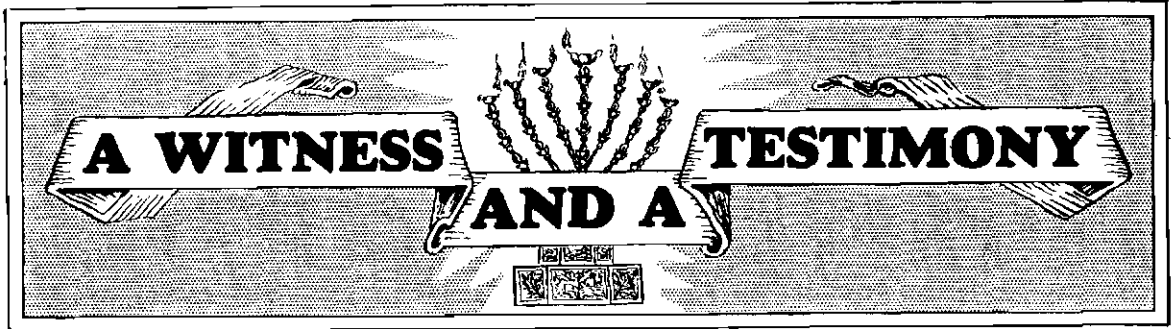
THIS MINISTRY

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 (literally—*full knowledge*) of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we be no longer children..."

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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.

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EDITORIAL

Dear fellow-members of Christ,

THIS issue of the *Witness and Testimony* closes another year of its ministry, bringing the total to 33 years. I wonder how many more before He comes, or we are with Him? We cannot do other than record our gratitude to our Lord for all these 33 years represent of His grace and faithfulness. This ministry for so long has not been maintained without heavy conflicts and cost. But through all, it has gone on uninterrupted, in peace and war ; in sorrow and rejoicing ; in good report and evil report ; and, although our hearts have sometimes failed, there has been no diminishing, but to-day it is still growing. To all the large family of those who have registered appreciation, and, in various ways, been an inspiration to us to continue, we give our warmest gratitude as this year closes. Only as we are assured that it is still needed will we continue its publication, with the Lord's help ; for we have no interest in keeping up anything from which “ the glory has departed ”.

Although it can only be a comparative matter, for it is small when compared with the vast numbers of Christians in the world, it is—in its measure—a test of spiritual hunger. No one will ever charge us with lightness or superficiality. We know right well that it is not light reading or easy of acceptance. It is therefore very gratifying to know that there are many who are hungry enough to appreciate and reach out for food of this kind. It is no doubt but an indication of so much greater hunger than we know. While we are often appalled at the superficiality of so much that engages the Lord's people, it is good to be able to discern a reaction—if not a revolt—against this, and a growing demand for that which is “ solid meat ”. It is a good sign! But it is fraught with much opposition of every kind, from open antagonism at one end, to subtle detraction at the other.

Pray for us, dear friends, that the door may still be kept open—and may open still more widely—for ‘ speaking the mystery of Christ ’; in other words, for revealing the greatness of His significance in God's eternal order.

Yours in His grace,

EDITOR

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

MEN WHOSE EYES HAVE SEEN THE KING

II. THE POWER AND PRESENCE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

Reading : II Peter i. 16 - 19.

"Concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you : searching what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them. To whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto you, did they minister these things, which now have been announced unto you through them that preached the gospel unto you by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven ; which things angels desire to look into " (I Peter i. 10 - 12).

IN our earlier meditation we saw that the word 'presence', used here by Peter, and by other writers, is a word which links the Transfiguration with the coming again of the Lord Jesus. The phrase is rightly translated 'power and presence'—the *presence*. That word, as you see, is applied to the Transfiguration: the presence of the Lord Jesus in majesty, in power, in glory. That same word is used, and in the same way, concerning His coming again. It is called His 'presencing', His 'being present'; and we know that that presencing will indeed be in power, majesty and glory. If these are the accompaniments of the presence of the Lord Jesus, as they are clearly seen to be, again and again—we shall indicate some of these occasions as we go on—if these be the accompaniments of His presence, then the issue, not only in transfiguration and what it means, and in the advent at the end, but surely upon every occasion of the presencing of the Lord Jesus, must be to bring an impact upon the situation, the conditions, the place where He is present.

THE IMPACT OF THE PRESENCE

There is here, on the Mount of Transfiguration, an impact. The three men who were there in His presence fell on their faces with great fear. The Lord Jesus had to approach and lay His hand on them, and say: "Arise, and be not afraid" (Matt. xvii. 7). The presence of the Lord Jesus will lay waste all our own strength; all our natural wisdom; all our pride; all our impetuosity. Peter—and another evangelist recording it tells us this—Peter said: "Master, it is good for us to be here:

and let us make three tabernacles . . ." The evangelist adds: "not knowing what he said" (Luke ix. 33). Here he is in his own impulsiveness again, obtruding himself into this situation, taking the speech upon his lips, and the situation into his hands, wanting to organize this, and to perpetuate it, and to make something of it. In Matthew's version he says: "I will make . . . three tabernacles . . ."—"I"!—Peter!—"not knowing what he said", truly perhaps with the best intentions; nevertheless Heaven had to rebuke him, and put him in his place, and this was a devastating experience, both for him and for his companions.

From one standpoint it is a glorious thing to see His majesty; from another standpoint it is always a fearful thing—that is, for the flesh, for the natural life. We cannot walk into this and take hold of it, make something of it for our pleasure and satisfaction. There is an impact in it, that is the point; it registers. If we pray for, and seek—as by His grace we surely shall—new vision of the Exalted Lord, we must be prepared to be brought very low, and to have all our own natural energies wasted; to realise that that Majesty demands nothing other than that we shall be on our faces. That is a good place to be when it is before Him.

It was a tremendous thing when Stephen saw his Lord in majesty and glory. It carried him through the awful ordeal of martyrdom, of being broken, shattered and slain, with all the hatred and malice that was being poured out by those who gnashed their teeth and ran upon him. It was a glorious emergence for Stephen to see the Lord in glory as he did: but it was a tremendously devastating thing for at least one man there. More than that, we could say that it was devastating for that nation; for, in what they were doing, they were only setting their double seal to what they had done to the very Man in the Glory. Again, it is impact. What I am trying to say is, not that such and such things characterize a visitation or a vision, but that we can never really see the Lord, and be in the presence of the Lord, without knowing it, and something happening—without it being tremendously effective.

Saul of Tarsus saw the Lord glorified, and no-one will argue as to there being an impact on that occasion. John saw Him; when he was in Patmos he saw his Lord glorified, and he fell to the ground

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—it is like that. And, whatever might be the consequences and effects, we would all say, Let us have it so, rather than this impotent, helpless, weak, ineffective state, in which we so often find ourselves. The effect of the Transfiguration, that is, of the seeing of the glorified Lord, is always something tremendous.

THE FACT OF THE TRANSFIGURATION

Now here, in his letter, Peter is affirming the *fact* of the Transfiguration. He is setting it over against what he calls “cunningly devised fables”—cleverly concocted reports; over against anything merely fictitious or imaginary. He says, ‘This is a *fact*! We were with Him; we saw; we heard. And’, he says, ‘this has been abundantly confirmed: “we have the word of prophecy made more sure”’—probably referring to what he said in the passage from his first letter that we read. The prophets all pointed on to that, to that suffering and glory which met on the Mount of Transfiguration, as Moses and Elijah spoke to Him about the Cross. His ‘exodus’, about to be accomplished at Jerusalem. The suffering and the glory met there on that mountain. Peter says that the prophets were all pointing to that, and seeking and searching diligently to know what manner of time it would be, when they prophesied the sufferings and the glory. He says that the prophets searched *diligently*. And then he crowns it all by saying, ‘This is something that angels are desirous of looking into!’ He says, ‘We have got it—we have got it all in fulfilment! We were there on the mount, and we have seen it working out ever since; we are living in the light and the power of that blending of suffering and glory, glory and suffering. The word of the prophets is confirmed, both in the event and in our history ever since the event—it is made sure.’

Probably Peter meant more than that, but he meant that. That is not the whole interpretation, but it is a part. What I am trying to underline is this *fact* that Peter himself is affirming here—the *thing had happened*. But, when Peter adds his word about “more sure”, you notice he carries it beyond the event, that historic event, that occasion on the mount. There is something added to this, something added to the (if we may call it) ‘incident’. Mighty incident! Something more—it has been “made more sure” in our case. What is it?

AN INWARD REALITY

Well, just this, that is so true in the other cases. It was not only something *before the eyes of Peter*

(and the others); it was something that happened *to* him, and afterward came *into* him. True, there was the event, the happening, in time, at a certain place. But, with it, something happened *in* Peter. You notice the immediate context: he is speaking of his departure. “Knowing that the putting off of my tabernacle cometh swiftly, even as our Lord Jesus Christ signified unto me.” ‘I will seek that you have these things after my departure . . .’ He is at the end of his life, at the end of his ministry; but something has happened that has carried him through. It is not that something has remained as the memory of an objective experience, but that something has happened *in* him.

This is more than a doctrine, more than a theory, more than even something in the Holy Scriptures. To see the Lord does something *in* us. We can get the ‘truth’ about anything and everything: all the truth that is available about the Lord Jesus Himself—His birth, His life, His works, His words, His death, His resurrection—all that there is; we can have all the ‘truth’ about the Church—and what a lot there is available; we can have it all, know it all—nothing fresh to know about it; and any other thing you like to mention, in the Scriptures—and yet the fact can remain that nothing has happened in us as a result. I ask you: What has all your knowledge of the Church meant, as a ‘happening’ in you, to effect something, to put you in a new place, with an entirely new conception, revolutionising your whole life, so that one whole order of things just falls away as empty, and another heavenly order comes in? That is how it ought to be. True spiritual apprehension ought not just to be something in front of us—it ought to be something *in* us. It was so with Peter, and we can trace this in his life.

Take again his great contemporary, Paul. Here is this fact, that, on the Damascus road, Jesus appeared *unto* him in glory—‘brightness above the brightness of the sun’. It was a tremendous objective ‘something’ that was before him; it struck him as from the outside. But as you know, when speaking of it years afterward, he says: “It pleased God . . . to reveal his Son *in* me” (Gal. i. 15, 16). It was not only *to* him—it was something *in* him. The apostle Paul’s whole life and ministry was based upon and sprang out of that double event, *to* and *in*. And the majesty of the Lord Jesus became an *inward* thing with him, and therefore a tremendously effective thing. The answer to the critics, who say that Saul of Tarsus was in a frenzy, and therefore was overtaken by a terrible hysteria, and began to ‘see things’, and believed that they were real, and that that is the psychological ex-

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planation of the conversion of Paul—the answer is his life of endurance, and suffering, and service, and love ; and his death for his testimony. You do not go that way, like that, on a dream, on an imagination, on an hysteria. I venture to say that a very small proportion of what Paul had to meet during the thirty years of his ministry would knock hysteria out of most men. No, something happened inside ; the vision did something in him, as well as being something to him.

And so we could go on with the other people, like John, who saw the Lord in His glory. But that is enough. The thing happened *to* him, but it happened *in* him. It was an event, true ; but it was also an abiding process. For, right on through their lives, this was the thing that was growing—this marvellous greatness of the Lord Jesus. They did not get it all at once, even in the wonderful event, but throughout their lives the one mighty thing that was happening was this growing realisation. Jesus, in all the greatness of His glorified Person and position, was dominating their whole horizon and the whole course of their lives.

THE PRINCIPLE OF SPIRITUAL VISION

Now that brings us to the principle of all this, which opens up a very large field, in which we could move for a long time. The principle is the principle of true, spiritual, inward vision. Not 'visionariness', but inward vision, which is specific, which is definite. Visionariness can be very abstract, but what we mean by 'vision', spiritual vision, is very concrete ; it is very specific. It is a Person who is in view, and this mighty Person is no abstraction. There is nothing unreal or imaginary when we see the Lord Jesus.

Let us weigh this whole matter. You and I and the Lord's people, as we said earlier, in our various places, various situations, various experiences, scattered and tried and pressed, need something very mighty to carry us through to the end. Things are becoming very grim, are they not ? Most of us are aware that we are in a most terrific spiritual conflict, and the Christian life is not getting easier. It is becoming exceedingly difficult just to hold on, keep on, and especially to be triumphant. That is how it was when Peter wrote his letter.

Now, we need more than words, and more than visionariness, to get us through. Our Christian lives ought to be based upon something like this: 'I have seen the Lord.' We shall only go through if that is true. By the operation and activity of the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven we must have an inward vision of the Exalted Lord. For all

endurance, and for all service, that is essential. Life that has to go on without that is just a drag ; it is an existence. Work or service without that inward vision has nothing in it to lift us, to carry us on. For everything—life and work and endurance—it is indispensable that we have this inward vision of the Lord in majesty and glory, kept fresh, kept clear, constantly revived. With such a vision all the essentials of effectiveness are bound up.

A SENSE OF PURPOSE

First of all, what we all need, what the Church as a whole needs, and what every part of it needs, is a mighty governing sense of purpose: that there is something for which to live, and something for which to work, and something for which to endure and go on: a real master-purpose in our existence. If you look into this matter in the New Testament, you will find that these men and the Church were brought into this master-purpose. We are so familiar with the very word that it has lost its music in our ears—'the Eternal Purpose'—'called according to His purpose'. They were governed by this objective, this goal, this something toward which they were being moved, drawn, constrained, urged and held ; which, again and again, when they were cast down, and it seemed that everything was hopeless, revived in them, and revived them, and brought them up again. It was not a mentality, not a theory, not an idea, but what Paul calls "the power that worketh in us"—"according to the power that worketh in us". The word 'worketh' there, as you know, is the one from which we get our word 'energize'—'the power that energizes in us'. What is it ?

Look again, and you will see that it had to do with that great, great end which God had fixed concerning His Son, the Lord Jesus, in universal majesty and glory and fulness. They had seen something of that in Him. It had become the great purpose which bound their lives, and drew them out in a sense that life is not empty, meaningless ; it has some great end: 'we see what it is—it is concerning the Lord Jesus'. We, too, must have that sense of purpose, or we shall not get very far. Not only was it *a* purpose, but this inward spiritual vision gave the incentive to life. Through days and years of wearing out and wearing down, weariness and disappointment, over many things disillusionment and heartbreak, it is not difficult to lose incentive ; to ask, Is it worth it ? is it all justified ? Are we not just spending our strength for nought ? We need incentive. It was this apprehension of Christ as having gone that way of weariness and

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devastation and triumph, and having been glorified, and now being there in the glory, which gave them the incentive; it imparted to life an incentive, a motive, a power.

COHESIVE POWER

Further, in this vision, there is the effect of cohesion. A vision is a very cohesive thing: that is, it has the power of drawing people together, holding them together, making them a 'together' people—those who are going on together. They have one vision. The great illustration of this is Nehemiah and the people of his time, with their one vision. Look at all the variety of people, and variety of gifts and qualifications—every kind of artisan and profession mentioned; every sphere of life; but they are one people, a solid whole, simply because they have got one vision. That wall and the rebuilding of the city dominated everyone's heart and everyone's mind, and brought them together in a wonderful unity. There is no other way of having unity but really to see the Lord Jesus, and have Him in view as on the Throne, above all, over all. It will bring us together.

I have said that what we all need is the power to endure; and it is just there, as we have seen, that Peter introduces the Transfiguration. He speaks about 'the trial of your faith being much more precious than gold that perisheth . . . '—the trial of your faith. 'Manifold temptations'—he brings in the vision as the power for enduring and going through. We are told that Moses endured 'as seeing Him who is invisible' (Heb. xi. 27). This is the power. Now, you can see this from the opposite and contrary standpoint. See the effects of loss of a vision! However many other visions the Lord's people may have, as soon as they lose the vision of the Lord Himself, as Lord over all, as on the Throne, what happens? They lose their sense of purpose; they lose their awareness of a true objective in their existence. They then have to have substitutes for that vision, to keep them going; but these things wear out and disappoint. The loss of vision always results in the loss of an incentive, real incentive for life.

In the same way, it is true of this matter of cohesion, coordination: lose vision, and the result is always disintegration, division, separation, confusion, and the loss of strength and stability. This is no matter of theory or technique—it is very true. Some of us know—and that is why we are speaking like this just now—we know that when a people have really been gripped by the vision of the Throne, the majesty of the Lord Jesus, the author-

ity of Christ, a wonderful sense of purpose comes on that people, and a wonderful incentive, and a wonderful unity: they are a one people. It is the Throne that has done it, and their apprehension of that Throne. And when things take the place of the Lord—anything that you like to mention—then the falling apart begins. Sooner or later the disintegration sets in, the confusion, the loss of heart, incentive and purpose. A real inward seeing of the Lord Jesus, as in the place of authority and government and majesty, is the answer to our every need, personally and collectively. It was so of old; it is so now.

FOUR MAJOR ELEMENTS

Do you notice how this Transfiguration was the confirmation and complement of all the teaching? Look again at the record of the Transfiguration in Matthew xvii. What have we? We have the four major elements of the Christian faith and the Christian life:

(1) THE PERSON OF THE LORD JESUS

"When Jesus came into the parts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Who do men say that the Son of man is? And they said, Some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. xvi. 13-17).

"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." I think that there it might have been said that Peter, once again, did not know what he was talking about! It was a tremendous utterance: 'Thou art the Messiah! Thou art the Messiah!' Both 'Christ' and 'Messiah' mean 'The Anointed One', and, as such, the Son of the Living God. Here is the basic fact of Christianity—the Person of the Lord Jesus. For a man like Peter, a Jew, versed and saturated in the Old Testament and Jewish history, to say that, meant far more than we realise. Think of the tremendous things that were bound up with that word 'Messiah'!

There were three great conceptions of the Messiah in Israel. The first we find in the first part of the prophecies of Isaiah—the 'Son of David'; the Seed and the Son of David. You remember Isaiah's prophecy about 'the shoot of Jesse' (Is. xi. 1); that was the first conception of the coming Messiah, the

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Anointed One, who should take over the Throne of David, and all that that meant.

In the second part of Isaiah, the Messiah is the Suffering Servant of Jehovah; King-Redeemer, Redeemer-King; and Isaiah liii stands right at the centre of that conception of the Messiah. We see the Throne, and Redemption: how it is going to work out.

We find the third conception of the coming Messiah in the book of Daniel, chapter vii. It is a very wonderful passage.

"I beheld till thrones were placed, and one that was ancient of days did sit: his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, and the wheels thereof burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened. . . . I saw in the night visions, and, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (Dan. vii. 9, 10, 13, 14).

That was their coming Messiah: King, Saviour, Reigning Lord for ever and ever, in universal sovereignty. When Peter said, 'Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the Living God', all that was present in the declaration. Hence, Jesus said, 'Flesh and blood did not reveal that to you. My Father knows the meaning of the Christhood, the Messiahship, the Sonship, and it is all that!'

Now, I have included that, only with a view to trying to revive this conception of the greatness of our Lord Jesus; to help toward the vision. I would that, as we speak of it, read of it, you might see that your Lord Jesus is no little, defeated lord—defeated at the hands of the great enemy. Only as we have such a conception and apprehension of His Person shall we get through in triumph.

(2) THE CHURCH

The second thing is the Church. The Person always does lead to the Church, in Divine sequence. *"I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt. xvi. 18).* Why? Well, for that very reason. It is His Church, the Church of this One—this One to whom the King-

dom is given, and the Throne; before whom all nations shall bow. The Church is the embodiment of the vision of the Exalted Lord. If that is true, it will make it a great Church, a powerful Church. If this One—this One of the Transfiguration mount, this One of Stephen's vision, of Paul's vision—if this One, by the Holy Spirit sent from Heaven, is embodied in the Church—then what a Church! what a Church! Is that the Church with which we are familiar? Have we really understood that that is what is meant by the very term 'Church'—the embodiment of Himself as Lord over all?

(3) THE CROSS

The third thing is the Cross.

"From that time began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem" (Matt. xvi. 21). "The Son of man shall be delivered up into the hands of men" (Luke ix. 44).

His wonderful Cross! I like that thought, that idea, that a certain writer has expressed when he has spoken of Christ 'reigning and ruling by His Cross'. There is no doubt that that is right. What looked, humanly, so much to the contrary—defeat and failure, loss and despair, weakness and helplessness—has proved in history to be the most potent force in the universe—the Cross of the Lord Jesus. Saul, before his conversion, looked upon the Cross as the very symbol of ignominy, of shame; something despicable, to be hated. Afterward he said: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. vi. 14, A.V.). From the shame to the glory. The Transfiguration transfigures the Cross. In other words, a vision of the glorified Lord will transfigure our sufferings, will altogether transform our afflictions. We see what that Cross meant really in the mind of God.

(4) THE COMING OF THE LORD

The fourth thing is the coming of the Lord.

"The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then shall he render unto every man according to his deeds" (Matt. xvi. 27).

The point is this, that the Transfiguration was the crown and confirmation, the complement of all those four things. It was the crown of the Person: Peter had said, 'Thou art the Christ!' Well, the mount of Transfiguration gave good evidence to that fact as he saw Him transfigured. The Lord had said to him: 'I will build My Church.' The mount of Transfiguration gave good hope for that Church, if He, that One, was going to build it. If the Lord

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was speaking about the Cross, the mount of Transfiguration will give an altogether new and different interpretation to the Cross. If He has spoken of His Coming Again in the Glory of the Father, the mount of Transfiguration explains that, demonstrates that.

Yes: to see the Lord in that way, glorified, is the confirmation of our whole faith; the establishment of our whole position; and the assurance of our final triumph with Him. The Lord give us a new vision of Himself—His power, His majesty and His presence.

T. A-S.

“ I HAVE GLORIFIED THEE ON THE EARTH ”

“ He that hath seen me hath seen the Father ” (John xiv. 9).

“ I have glorified thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which thou hast given me to do ” (John xvii. 4).

“ Christ shall be magnified in my body ” (Philippians i. 20).

ONE great purpose of the incarnation was that here, on earth, the Lord Jesus should show men what God is like. This was a task committed to Him by the Father, and in His last great prayer He was able to hand back that trust as completed—‘ having accomplished that which Thou gavest Me to do ’. We are left in no doubt as to what was being considered, for He Himself explained it by saying, “ I have glorified thee on the earth ”. This does not seem to refer to His atoning death, for the words were spoken before He was crucified; it seems rather to speak of His daily life here on the earth, here among men. On this same earth on which we live and in similar human experiences which are common to us all, He was entrusted with the task of displaying the true character of God, and so showing forth the Divine glory. He was given the task, and He could claim fully to have performed it.

OUR LIFE'S WORK

Is it not true that we also have a life-work? Is there not also in our case some task which the Father has given us to do? A great deal of confusion exists about this very matter, with many and varied counsels as to what Christians ought to be doing. When we turn to the Word of God, however, there is no confusion, for the matter is clearly explained in the words, and illustrated in the life, of the Son of God. His life's work here on the earth, as a Man, was to glorify the Father. In essence, the same is true in our case: we also are called to glorify God here on earth. Should we desire further enlightenment on this matter, we are given help in the words of the Lord Jesus Himself, who described His successful living by reminding Philip

that “ he that hath seen me hath seen the Father ”. This was at least one phase of Christ's life-work—to demonstrate personally the character of God, and to let men see how that character could be expressed in human experience.

For us, also, the purpose of our redeemed lives here on earth is that the same glorious character should be shown to men—that Christ should be magnified in our bodies. Peter stressed the corporate nature of this revelation, saying that the elect race and royal priesthood of God's people have been chosen “ that ye may shew forth the excellencies of him who called you . . . ” (I Pet. ii. 9). In Paul's personal testimony, however, we have the more individual aspect of this same Divine outshining, and we shall confine what we now have to say to the individual and personal. The words are familiar enough, that “ Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death. ” Quite clearly this represented the apostle's supreme concern, that which, so far as he was concerned, was the most important thing of all, his “ earnest expectation and hope ”, the meaning of his existence and the cause for which he would gladly lay down his life. It was not just that Christ should be glorified in some general way, or vaguely in unseen realms, but there and then, literally in his own human body, there should be ample proof of the Lord's greatness.

We have used the word ‘ task ’. It should not be thought, however, that anything irksome was involved, or that it was a question of any job of work to be taken up or later laid aside. Christian living represented no burden to him. His was no legal drudgery of what you must or must not do. No, he thankfully claimed to have been delivered from anything of that nature. His life now had a rhythm, a meaning and a purpose; it had nothing in it of the burdensome or restrictive. On the contrary, there is much in this letter to the Philippians to prove that it was his sublimest joy, his constant source of heart satisfaction, to have the privilege of living Christ as well as of talking about Him. The words do not refer primarily to his work as a preacher or teacher, to what we so often call

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'ministry'. Of course such work is ministry. It is our chief and most important ministry. But the emphasis is not on good works, but on a quality of life.

The Lord Jesus could confidently affirm that He had accomplished His great life's work. The apostle's language, as befits a faulty man, was more qualified. Yet, in all humility, he was able to say that in the past this had been true in his case. Christ had been magnified in his body. There had been some exhibition of the beautiful character of his Lord, as he had travelled about and lived his life before men. In any case, he was emphatic that this was his earnest desire and intention, and that, if in this matter he had either failed in the past or were to fail in the future, then he would be ashamed of himself. We are called to show forth Christ in our lives. If we fail in this, we fail altogether.

WRONG IDEAS OF GLORY

We must beware of wrong ideas or expectations when we consider this magnifying of our Lord. We need always to consider Him. There were, of course, events in His public ministry when it was obvious that God's glory was being revealed. When the sea waves, in their tumultuous fury, were silenced at a word, then there could be no question about the powerful presence of God. When the Lord Jesus stood at the tomb of Lazarus and with a simple word of command called the dead man back to life and to the outside world, then everyone marvelled, as well they might. There were many such acts of power in the course of Christ's ministry which truly glorified the Father. But it was surely not of these that the Lord was speaking when He affirmed that those who had seen Him had seen the Father. So much of His life was occupied with the simple, ordinary things, the humdrum, the obscure and even the menial, and it was in these daily affairs of human experience that the Lord Jesus claimed to have glorified the Father on earth. So much more of our lives is occupied with these same things: here, then, is a sphere of opportunity in which Christ can be magnified in *our* bodies.

We have our own ideas of glory, and they are often wrong. There was an afternoon when Jesus sat, travel-stained and weary, hungry and thirsty, by the side of Jacob's well. Most people, and many Christians among them, would not consider that such a condition could possibly glorify the Father. They would reason, God is not like that! There were no outward evidences of glory in that dusty Traveller, with His simple request for a drink of

water from the well. That day He did no sensational miracle. He gave no sign from heaven. Yet in that tired body there was such a manifestation of the Father's grace and goodness that the Samaritan woman became completely transformed. She caught a glimpse of heavenly glories, even though the medium of the vision was the human body of a humble Man tramping along Samaria's dusty highways. Such a story makes us echo the apostle's prayer that 'Christ may also be magnified in my body'.

Consider Him also at Bethany, before the great resurrection miracle had taken place. One of His best friends had died without a word of comfort or cheer from Him. The two sisters, whose love mattered very much to Him, were reproachful and hurt at His strange behaviour, suggesting that He need not have let this tragedy come to their home. Some deep emotion must have passed over His own soul, for we are told that "Jesus wept". We know, of course, that the Lord Jesus changed these circumstances, but for the moment they were as adverse as could be; the loss, the misunderstanding and the reproaches all seemed to deny the presence of the glory of the Father. Yet even at that moment the Father was manifesting Himself through the Son, even though human judgment might well have insisted that all the evidences were against any justification of a spiritual position. To the natural mind it could easily have seemed all wrong.

My reason for stressing this is to safeguard any loss of assurance we may have as to the inward presence of the Lord through judgments based on these outward appearances. By the natural mind, glory is sometimes made synonymous with sensation. When signs and wonders are being performed, then, and then only, will some feel satisfied that the glory of God is being seen. Yet surely the nature of the Father was manifested in Christ even apart from the transformations that followed. Hungry and thirsty, travel-stained and tear-stained, appreciated or misunderstood, it made no difference to the essential Man. Perhaps, indeed, the difficult circumstances were the best way of demonstrating the true glory of His character. "Now is my soul troubled", He had to confess; yet almost with the same breath He could add: "Father, glorify thy name", and receive the answer from Heaven that the Name was certainly being glorified (John xii. 27, 28).

THE GLORY OF HIS HUMILITY

In the next chapter of John's Gospel, chapter xiii, we are told how the Lord Jesus washed His dis-

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ciples' feet, and are reminded that the action was performed when Jesus knew "that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father". In other words, the consciousness uppermost in his mind was of the tremendous and costly task of the world's redemption. Knowing this—knowing the immensity of the responsibility which rested upon Him, as well as the sufferings which He must endure—knowing all that, He yet had the time and the patience to do this menial task of feet-washing. When we are faced with what seems to us a great spiritual issue or trial, how often do we lack patience with others or with the lesser details of daily life and duty. In this, however, as in all else, the Lord Jesus perfectly revealed the Father, for it is one of the great glories of God that He can cope with the infinitely great and yet at the same time deal carefully with the infinitely small and insignificant.

And what He did was pure unselfishness, without any thought of gain or reward. As a matter of fact we are also reminded that He was fully aware that all honour was already His: "... knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands ..." (v. 3). He was not seeking to get, only wanting to give. He need not have so condescended. There might have seemed to be many reasons why such an unworthy group of men should not be so treated. He did not need to gain credit with the Father, for He already had all, and He knew that He had all. Yet, with that knowledge, and for no personal reason at all, He humbled Himself to perform this lowly task. And in His humbling, as much as in any of His supernatural miracles, He could truly claim: "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father". This is what God is like, the God who 'so loved that He gave ...'

What a lesson for us, then, not to be striving for that which gratifies *our* idea of what is glorifying to God, but to be content for Him to reveal Himself through us in every circumstance. We must never fall into the mistake of imagining that the circumstances and difficulties of life, the apparent contradictions, the humbling trials or the mundane trivialities, are hindrances to spiritual usefulness, nor to think that only when we are freed from such distractions can we properly fulfil our 'ministry'. No, this is our ministry, as it was Christ's; this is the thing which He has given us to do: to let men see what He is like, for He is always glorious.

ONLY ONE THING MATTERS

For Paul, there was only one consideration worthy of attention, and that was the glorifying of Christ in his body. What happened to him per-

sonally was of very small consequence. He did not say, 'I must at all costs live', nor did he say, 'I must on no account die'. Alas! that, so often, these and even unworthier selfish considerations are given so much weight! To the apostle, the important thing was not what happened to him, but whether Christ was being magnified while it happened. Prosperity or adversity, comfort or suffering, even life or death—these were not the important alternatives. The really vital question was as to whether, in that human body of his, something of Christ was being revealed, to God's glory, or whether, on the other hand, there was only shameful failure. His concern and his hope was that "in nothing" should there be that in his life which would fail to magnify Christ. Neither he nor we can affirm that those who see us see the Father, or see Christ. There would be an element of presumption, or something worse, if we did. Yet we ought to be able to know that, in seeing us, men see something of Christ. Not only in the great moments of spiritual exaltation, but in the ordinary affairs of our daily existence, people should meet Christ when they meet us.

"For to me to live is Christ" is only possible because Christ Himself lives in me. This, of course, was the secret of the manifestation of the Father's glory in His Son. The Lord Jesus Himself explained His own claim by adding "... the Father in me ..." (John xiv. 10, 11). It was not that He was trying to give them an exhibition, to demonstrate something which would give people an impression of what the Father was like. It was the Father abiding in Him who did the works. And how else can we show men what Christ is like? The secret for us is the same as the secret of Christ's fulfilled task—it is the secret of the indwelling. There was a "supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" for Paul, and that made it possible for Christ to be magnified in him. It was a supply which was always available, but only appreciated and appropriated as and when the apostle came to know his need. Life is meant to bring a succession of discoveries of our need of Christ, and with every such discovery the way is opened for a new inflow of the supply. This is the explanation of so much that we cannot otherwise understand—this plunging of us into new tests where only a fresh supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ will meet our need. And as our need is met, as we prove the sufficiency of Christ to meet our own inward need, so there can be a new showing forth of His glory through us.

The supply is also described as the answer to the supplications of praying friends. We often do not

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know how best to pray for one another. The Philippians found this difficulty in the case of Paul. It seems that they had prayed for his release from prison, and so were perplexed, because it looked as though their prayers had not been answered. But they had. True, he was not released from prison, but that was not the real objective of their praying. That objective was—or at least should have been—that Christ might be magnified in Paul's body. And there is abundant reason for believing that, in spite of the prison, or perhaps better because of the prison, Christ was magnified in him. "As always . . ." were his words. It may be in preaching, it may be in silence; it may be by mighty works or it may be by terrible sufferings; by life or by death, what matters, so long as the glory of Christ is seen in him?

There is, of course, one great difference between the Lord Jesus and all others. In our case—even in the case of an apostle Paul—there is our own old life which will always obscure the Lord's glory if it is given the opportunity. If people meet *me*, they will not meet the Lord. It may be a nice 'me' or it may be an unpleasant 'me', but if they only meet me I shall have failed of my life's vocation and they will get no true blessing. Our consolation is that the Spirit who supplies our new inward life is also the Spirit who can make real in us the delivering work of the Cross. When self is dealt with by the Cross, when faith lays hold of the abundant supply of the Spirit, then, and then only, can Christ be magnified in our bodies, and we also accomplish that which the Father has given us to do.

H. F.

" THY FIRST LOVE "

"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, he that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks: I know thy works, and thy toil and patience, and that thou canst not bear evil men, and didst try them which call themselves apostles, and they are not, and didst find them false; and thou hast patience and didst bear for my name's sake, and hast not grown weary. But I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I come to thee, and will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God" (Revelation ii. 1-7).

"Go, and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord, I remember concerning thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals; how thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, the firstfruits of his increase" (Jeremiah ii. 2, 3a).

IT is surely significant that the first letter of the seven in the book of the Revelation, and the last of the seven, have to do with this love that has grown cold. We would say, naturally, that 'Ephesus' is far removed from 'Laodicea', and it is. A comparison, or a contrasting of these two letters would

show the difference in their character. And yet it is to the church at 'Ephesus' that the Risen Lord speaks this heartbreaking word: "Thou hast left thy first love".

The beginning of the church was a wonderful beginning; its progress was wonderful too; and it reached such a height of spirituality that Paul could write that 'Letter to the Ephesians'—a letter that has never been exhausted. It was to Ephesus that the Risen Lord spoke these words; and so the first thing that arises, surely, is this. The peril into which the Ephesian church fell was not a peril that lies in the way of the inexperienced; it was not one of those dangers of immaturity: it was something that overtakes the experienced.

" WORKS . . . TOIL . . . PATIENCE . . . "

If you look rapidly through the letter, you will see how much the Lord commends the church. In passing, I would point out that you and I, when we are faced with any situation, almost invariably tend to swing to an extreme: the Lord does not do that. Calmly and deliberately, the Risen Lord faces the Ephesian church with the true state of things. In His letter to Laodicea He begins by saying that He is the 'Faithful and True' (Rev. iii. 14)—and He does this with Ephesus. He says, "I know thy works . . .": and He is not condemning their works; the Risen Lord is not saying works are wrong; He is commending them. 'I know thy works—thy activities; I know what you are doing; I am not finding fault with it.'

"I know . . . that thou canst not bear evil men, and didst try them which call themselves apostles . . ."

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and didst find them false." That was their orthodoxy. Now we are inclined to speak slightly of orthodoxy: but orthodoxy is a true, correct thing; the Lord has no place for unorthodoxy; and He is commending their perception. Paul had foreseen that these would come in—"There will come in wolves amongst you," he had said to them when he bade them Goodbye (Acts xx. 29). They had come in, and the Ephesians had tried them. John says that is what we are to do—try the spirits, as to whether they are true or false (I John iv. 1). No, the Lord does not condemn their zeal for the truth: He commends it.

"I know . . . that . . . thou hast patience and didst bear for my name's sake"—their persistence. Again, let me stress, the Lord is not saying that it is wrong; it is not wrong to have experience. It is not wrong to be able to look back over the years and see how we have been enabled by the Lord to persist for His Name's sake. The Lord is commending their patience.

"Thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate"—their contention for truth; 'fundamentalism', if you like. It is easy for us, in a kind of superior air and attitude, to condemn these things—the Lord does not do that. 'I know . . . I know—I have taken account of it.'

“. . . BUT . . .”

We might cite here some words of His to others: 'These things ye ought to have done, and not left the other undone' (Matt. xxiii. 23)! The Lord is commending this church: it is a church that has faith; a church that has laboured—and the words that the Lord uses are tremendous words. 'You have laboured to the point of being weary'. The word that He uses is a word which means 'to take a beating': 'you have laboured for Me until you have felt that you have had a beating'—that is 'toil'! 'I know thy toil!' And this church had patience—"I know thine endurance". Dr Campbell Morgan says that if you and I had come to this church we would have said, 'That is a model church!' And, he says, we should have had to be there for quite a time before we sensed that there was something missing. But the Lord saw it. A model church; a correct church; a church with a true order: but the Lord says, 'I have *this* against thee—thou hast left thy first love.'

Love has declined. That is a common thing. It is a common thing, in natural life, for love that was once abandonment to become acceptance, tolerance. It has settled down—that is the story of many an earthly marriage—settled down! 'Thou hast left

thy first love'. The terrible thing is this, that, because of this lack, nothing else matters. That is the point of this letter. With all that the Lord can commend in that Ephesian church, He says, 'You have lost something, which means that, unless you recover it, I shall have to remove your candlestick.'

The Lord cannot be satisfied with a 'correct' church; He cannot be satisfied with an 'active' church, a church that is functioning to the full; He cannot be satisfied with a church that is orthodox and fundamental; He cannot be satisfied with a church that has gone to the point of breaking in bearing in toil, and gone on without wearying: He cannot be satisfied with it. The word that He uses about this Ephesian church, with all that would commend it to others, is this: "Thou art fallen"—thou art *fallen*! "Remember . . . from whence thou art fallen"—and the word 'fallen' that He uses is a word that brings real strength to His complaint: 'thou art lost'; 'thou art cast ashore'; 'you are shipwrecked—you are fruitless—you are ineffectual—you have come to an end'! All that is in the word that He uses, 'fallen'. 'Remember whence thou art fallen'! The Lord is looking for a love that is not found at Ephesus—He calls it 'first love'.

“THE LOVE OF THINE ESPOUSALS”

In the complaint of the Lord through the prophet Jeremiah, He takes up this word: "I remember thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals". Quite a number of things may rightly be put down to youth—immaturity, impetuosity; but the Lord says this about youth—"the kindness of thy youth". Again, the word that is used there by Jeremiah, or the Lord through Jeremiah, is the word 'ardour'. 'I remember thine ardour . . . the love of thine espousals—I remember it.' It was a love that was willing to follow the Lord into a wilderness, a land not sown. Surely that means, that, in the affection, the ardour of this espousal-love, nothing else mattered. And is that not true in the day of espousal? What kind of a love is it that is calculating and reserved? if you like, a love that reasons? What kind of love is that? It is not the love of espousals.

In the love of youth—"the kindness of thy youth"—everything was unto the Lord; "Israel was holiness unto the Lord"! And we know that 'holiness' was 'exclusive'—exclusively for the Lord; set apart. No one else was to have a part at all. 'I have set apart him that is godly', says the Lord, 'for Myself' (Ps. iv. 3). "The firstfruits of his increase"—the Lord's increase, not Israel's—

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the firstfruits! Oh, how the Lord rejoices over His firstfruits! We have it in Zephaniah (iii.17), how He rejoices over His own; in Hosea, the love of the Lord for His own, and how He longs for a return of a love that is *abundant*. This is the kind of love that is here spoken of. Paul takes it up in the Corinthian letter: "I espoused you . . . as a pure virgin to Christ." But listen: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve in his craftiness, your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ" (II Cor. xi. 2, 3). This is the kind of love that the Lord is looking for. And what does He say? 'Remember . . . remember . . .' Friends, dare we remember?

" . . . REMEMBER . . . "

Now, do not put it on one side, and say, Oh, it is another old man thinking about the 'good old days'. It is the Lord who is saying this: 'Remember!' Remember what? 'The love of thine espousals!' You know; I know. You may have to go back a good many years, but never mind, go right back to the beginning. Ask the Holy Spirit to enable you; He will. You remember the first days of knowing the Lord. Did you love Him? Of course we loved Him! and I dare make bold to say that there is not one of us, going back to those first days, who would not say, 'I would have done anything for the Lord—anything! Whatever He asked of me, I would have done it!' That is the love of espousals. For every one of us, it was an encounter like the encounter of Rebecca with the servant of Abraham. Faced with everything: 'Wilt thou go with this man? I will go!' (Gen. xxiv. 58). 'Come what may, for better or for worse, I will go.' That is the language of 'espousals'; that is the 'love of espousals'; the first love—the *first* love!

How has our love survived? Oh, we can produce, maybe, a lot of activities; we can tell the Lord what we have done; and we may still be 'fundamental', quite 'orthodox', nothing wrong with what we believe; we may have borne a lot for the Lord's name, with patience. But as the Lord looks into our hearts, can He say to you and to me, 'The first love is still there! you love Me just like you used to love Me; it has never waned!'? Has it? have you allowed disappointment, with things and people, to creep into your love to the Lord? Have you been offended, when in His faithfulness He has afflicted you? Has your love gradually waned, until you have 'settled down'? Oh, what an awful condition, to have 'settled down' with the Lord! 'Remember, remember . . . remember!'

" . . . REPENT . . . "

And the second thing He says is: 'Repent . . .' It is not an easy thing to recover love. It drips away almost imperceptibly; it goes little by little, until you are awakened to realise that your heart is not as warm as it used to be, and ought to be. You can have an affection for the 'things' of the Lord—redemption, salvation, sanctification, glorification—and yet your heart can be somehow cold toward the Lord. A wife can be so busy, or a husband can be so busy, even providing for the other, but the partner has no time for return of affection—that is true! and it is true here! Have we become so concerned about the Lord's 'things'—even perhaps so concerned about the Lord's Church, as some 'thing'—that the Lord becomes obscured? His gifts, the things He does for us—we get taken up with them, as did these in Ephesus, and the Lord says, Remember . . . repent . . . repent!

What does the word 'repent' there mean? This is a repentance of believers. The word 'repent' means 'go back'—"Repent, and do the first works"—go back to the beginning; let us begin again. Is that not a reasonable way of looking at it? Here is a couple: as the years have drifted, they have become at a distance. What are they going to do? Remember the first days; let us go back and begin again. And that is what the Lord says: 'Come, come with Me; let us go back to the beginning; let us renew the love of your espousals; let everything go, and come back to the beginning, and let us have a renewal of those early days, those days of first love! Repent . . .'

" . . . RETURN . . . "

And the third thing, surely—and I borrow a word from the prophets now; it is inherent in the letter—is: 'Return . . . return . . . or else . . .'—dreadful alternative!—or else . . . What the Lord says, in effect, to the church in Ephesus, is this: 'If you do not recover your first love, I am not going on with you! I am not going on, unless and until we can get back to the place where we have recovered your first love for Me. Your works do not count; your orthodoxy does not count; your correctness does not count; your persistence, your endurance—it does not count.' It is a dreadful thing, but that is what He is saying—'or else I will remove thy candlestick'—and this is to Ephesus!

May we make it individual? Friends, may I open my heart to you? I want to recover first love. I loved the Lord in those early days; I want to re-

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cover that love. Oh, I have become more experienced ; I know a good deal more than I knew then ; behind me there lies experience of the Lord through many days of darkness and difficulty—but I want that first love! And the Lord has been saying to me: 'Remember, remember ; do not brush it on one side ; do not make excuses ; remember! Let us go back to the beginning. Repent, do the first works . . . or else . . . ' 'I remember for

thee the love of thine espousals, the kindness of thy youth!' Some of us have grown too old ; we have become staid and stolid—spiritually, I mean ! We know!—not only for ourselves, but for other people! Perhaps there is yet that about us that, if we had love, the Lord would commend ; but without love, He says, it is no good, no good ; we cannot go on. The Lord help us to get back, every one of us, to the place of such a love. C. O.

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

WHISPER A PRAYER

ONE day Jackson Minor was nearly turned out of St. Paul's Cathedral in disgrace. It happened like this. His school had originally been founded in the City of London, and as a consequence of the old associations the boys were still allowed to visit certain places in the City without having to pay the usual cost of entrance. One day he and two other boys were sent up from their school in the country to be present at a function of one of the old City Guilds, and as they had plenty of time to spare, they decided to use their privilege by paying a free visit to St. Paul's.

Having admired the main building, they went down into the crypt, but soon found this boring, so they decided to go up into the dome. Like multitudes of others who have done this, they climbed round and round the winding stairs, visited the Library with its many treasures, and finally found themselves in the gallery at the widest part of the great dome. This is called The Whispering Gallery. With the other sightseers already gathered there, they were told to walk round to the farthest point on the other side of the gallery, and then listen to what the guide would say to them.

When they had arrived there, and were all quite still, they could hear the voice of the guide. Actually he was a long way away from them, for the dome is very wide at that point, but the guide did not need to raise his voice, as he himself began to explain to them. He told them that he was only whispering against the wall, and that the sound carried right round to the other side, so that Jackson Minor and his friends could hear every word. The guide told how the Cathedral had been built by Sir Christopher Wren, gave details of its size, and then explained that the peculiar quality of sound-carrying in the dome was quite unexpected and unintentional.

Jackson Minor and his friends were getting bored again, so, instead of listening to what was being said, they began to talk and joke among

themselves. They did this in low tones, for they did not wish to be a nuisance to the other sightseers, and some of what they said was making fun of the guide. When they were all told to walk round the other half of the gallery to rejoin the guide, they did so and looked at him with pious and innocent faces. To their great surprise, however, he was not deceived, but came angrily up to them and threatened to have them turned out of the Cathedral! They still gazed at him with looks of pained innocence, until they suddenly realised that he had listened to every word of their mocking conversation. 'I heard all that you said', the irate guide continued. 'You must not forget that the whispering works both ways.' This made the boys feel ashamed, and they were glad to go to the outside gallery to look over London. As they did so they discussed their stupidity in not realising that if they could hear the guide's whispers, of course he could also hear theirs. The sounds went right round the dome.

Years afterwards, Jackson was travelling in the South American jungle, when he fell and injured his ankle. He could not walk, so they halted for the rest of the day, and his two Red Indian guides went off to hunt for food. These men were pagans and full of fears about evil spirits. Jackson knew very well that unless he could continue the journey the next day, they would go without him, leaving him to die alone in the forest. He was in great peril, as well as being in pain. As he lay there, reading his New Testament, he suddenly remembered his boyhood and the Whispering Gallery of St. Paul's, thousands of miles away. What was it that the guide had said? 'You must not forget that the whispering works both ways.' He was not in a cathedral now, but he was in the great dome of the love of Christ. Did the whispering still work? It certainly did in one direction, for as he read from the Scriptures it was as though the Saviour Himself was whispering words of comfort into his heart.

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But—the whispering works *both* ways. So he whispered back his prayer for help in that great time of need. The Lord heard right enough, as the wonderful answer to prayer proved. He never knew how it was, but next morning, when the two Indians got ready to resume the trek, he was able to go on with them, and had no more trouble in walking.

‘Whisper a prayer’. That was all he had to do. And it is all that we have to do. When we are in the

great circle of the love of Christ, we are never far from Him. He whispers to us, and if we listen we can hear every word. We whisper to Him, and He will certainly hear us, for there is never a moment when He is not listening. The psalmist knew this, for he tells us: “The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry” (Psalm 34. 15).

H. F.

THE OCTAVE OF REDEMPTION

II. THE EARTHLY LIFE OF THE LORD JESUS

WHEN we ask the question: Why the earthly life of the Lord Jesus?—it is clear that that question implies and contains within itself other questions. For instance: Why was it necessary for Him to be here for something over thirty-three years? Again: Why was it necessary for by far the greater part of that time to be spent in private, and, so far as we are concerned, in secret? We shall try to answer these, and other, subsidiary questions, to some extent at least, as we go on.

Much has been made of the earthly life of Christ—usually for the purpose of showing that there was such a person as Jesus of Nazareth, and what a good person He was, and how much greater He was as a teacher than other teachers; or at most to show that He was more than just a man. There may be other purposes for writing books on the life of Jesus, but these usually comprehend the object. Of course, seeing that Jesus has become a great historical world figure, it is interesting to know where He was born, where and how He was brought up, where He went about in the country, what He taught, the miracles that He performed, and so on. All this has provided material for a great deal of discussion and controversy. The miracles have provided much food for the psychologists, and His teaching for the theologians and the doctrinaires. But when you have said all that you can say and written all that you can write on those matters, you may not have advanced much beyond the human story. The human story, as such, appeals very much to the emotion, to the imagination, but it does not change character. However fascinating, impressive and moving it may be, if you just leave it there you have stopped short of the real meaning of the earthly life of the Lord Jesus.

The earthly life of our Lord was not intended for those purposes. The record of His life was not intended merely to provide us with data and informa-

tion and interesting matter about a certain man—however great and wonderful—who lived so long ago, in such-and-such a part of the world, and said and did such-and-such. He did not come for that. He was not here for thirty years and a little more for that purpose at all. His life was intended to show—not merely that He was in many respects different from other men, but that He was of a different *order* of mankind from all the rest, the best included. Until you have clearly recognised that, you have not found the key to the earthly life of the Lord Jesus. He met some of the best types of men of His day, but between Him and them there was a great gulf fixed—there was no passing from the one side to the other.

A DIFFERENT ORDER OF MANKIND

Jesus was a mystery. He was not just mysterious—He *was* a mystery. He was not just misunderstood. So many have said about Him, ‘He was an altogether misunderstood man.’ No, He was not just misunderstood—He was *un-understood*, and that is very different. Jesus did not conform to any of the principles and methods upon which this world is run. He did not do what He was expected to do, either by the world or by His friends. Often He put that expectation back: He did not instantly fulfil it because He was asked to, or because it was expected of Him. He put a gap between the expectation and whatever He did. And into that gap you must place this uniqueness that there was about Him, as an order of man—His ‘otherness’ from other men. If you try to fit Him in, try to make Him a part of the established human order, try to show how He did this and did that, in a kindly way, just because He was so kind, you have altogether missed the point.

Why, for instance, when that embarrassing situation arose at the marriage in Cana of Galilee, and

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it was presented to Him as *His* opportunity, did He put it back with something that sounded very much like a rebuff? So far as the expectation of people was concerned, nothing might ever have happened—but for something else that belonged to another realm altogether. And we find the same kind of thing repeated in other connections. He did not do what people expected Him to do—He very often did what they never expected Him to do. He did the unexpected—took people, not only completely by surprise, but right out of their depth. They just could not follow Him in some of the things that He did. He did not go where people expected Him to go, and when, and so conform to their order and programme. And He certainly did not say what He was expected to say—far from it. On the contrary, He said many things that He was not expected to say—difficult things, shocking things, offending things.

Now, Jesus was not just being different, being awkward, being singular. There are people who behave like that, but on entirely different grounds. They are merely trying to be singular, exceptional, unusual, to do the unexpected, to be awkward. I knew a Christian man, some years ago, who had gained a great name in this world, and who, by reason of the tremendous amount that had been made of him, had developed an ultra-self-consciousness. On one occasion I was having a talk with him in the garden, and after a little time I suggested that we should come into the house. I took him by the arm to walk up with him, and he instantly drew himself up stiff, stuck his heels in and absolutely refused to budge! 'Well!' I thought, 'what is this?' I had to wait a minute or two—evidently until he had satisfied himself that it was right to move—and then he relaxed and we walked up together—but not arm-in-arm! I had learnt my lesson. I came to know that he had adopted a manner on this: that he was never going to allow himself to be influenced, or affected, or led, or in any way moved, by another human being. He had come to such an 'ultra' place that he would not even walk arm-in-arm with a brother Christian unless the Lord told him to! Ultimately, of course, it developed into quite a serious complex. But you see what I mean. It is possible to act like that on an altogether false basis.

Jesus was not like that. He may have seemed to behave like that at times, but it was not on that basis. We need to be very clear about this—this strange, this unknown way with Him, which often perplexed and mystified, sometimes disappointed, and sometimes even annoyed and angered. But these are facts; these are very clearly recognisable

features of the earthly life of the Lord Jesus. They were not of the order of which I have spoken—an ultra-self-consciousness, a deliberate standing apart, *trying* to be different from others, wearing a strait jacket, unbending, unyielding. There was nothing of that about Him. We have got to explain it, for there is no mistaking it. There He is—an unknown man.

THE NEGATIVE SIDE: 'CIRCUMCISED IN HEART'

Here then, was a Man—with a capital 'M'—living a human life on a basis different from that of every other man. There was a negative and a positive aspect of that fact. The negative aspect was this: He was, if I may bring in the expression here, 'circumcised in heart'. That is, He was utterly separated from the self-principle in every way, in His mind, heart and will. He would not use His mind, or think His thoughts, or arrive at His judgments, on the basis of any self-principle whatsoever. Nor had self any place in His feelings or His will. Here is a man who has a soul—a mind, a heart and a will—constituting Him a true human being, but in whose soul the self-principle has been put completely aside.

You cannot make Him do anything along the line of ordinary human reasoning, however right or good it may seem to be. 'They have no wine—therefore . . .' An argument comes in, a reasoning. 'Therefore' . . . this and that and some other thing, constituting a very good case for His intervening and doing something. It could be argued from almost every standpoint as being a thing that He should do: from the standpoint of human kindness, from the standpoint of the vindication of His mission, the establishment of His Divine Person. Yes, you can argue it from any and every standpoint, but He is not moving on a mind that is influenced by any kind of argument. The only consideration with Him is: Does My Father *will* it? and does My Father *will* it *now*? and does My Father *will* it *in this way*? Those are the things that influence His mind and His heart and His will—His soul. Until He is sure about that, nothing on this earth or in this world, no argument or appeal or case, will get Him to move. For He is doing something, and we are going to see presently what it is that He is doing.

I have said He was utterly 'circumcised in heart'. That is a biblical phrase (see Rom. ii. 29). We need to understand the meaning of it. It means that in the heart there has taken place an absolute severance between two things. If you like, you can sub-

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stitute 'soul' for 'heart'; it is the inner man. Something had been done in Him inwardly, and He kept steadfastly to that ground to the end. It was upon *that* ground, in one form or another, that the fiercest battles in His life were fought. Sometimes the assault came through an innermost friend and disciple: "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall never be unto thee." "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou mindest . . . the things of men" (Matt. xviii. 22, 23). 'Your outlook is that of men—merely on the level of *men*. I do not belong to that realm of men in which you move. Other men may listen to your argument, be influenced, persuaded; but as for Myself—no!' And so it is, right to the end: He steadfastly held to that ground—the ground of what we will content ourselves by calling the ground of inward heart circumcision.

That, as I have said, was the focal point of Satan's persistent endeavour: reason, argument, as to why He should, or should not, do certain things. It is a matter of argument, sometimes the argument of absolute necessity. 'Your body demands bread or you will die. Necessity requires that you turn these stones into bread.' So say men, but not the Divine Son of God, not the Son of Man. Jesus repudiated that argument absolutely.

Yes, Satan's focal point of every attack was just there—to try to get Him to do, to act, to move, to decide, according to human standards, to be influenced by the ordinary dictates of human life as we know it; and He refused. That being the focal point of all satanic attacks and efforts, that was the realm of His absolute victory over Satan and the world. "The prince of this world cometh: and he hath nothing in me" (John xiv. 30). What was he looking for?—the self-principle. If only he could get that moving, if only he could stir that into action, through mind, heart or will, the same thing would happen with the last Adam as happened with the first, and the Kingdom would go again into the hands of the Devil. But he has met a different kind of Man, who is not coming out to him on that ground at all. Jesus did not just say, 'The Devil is coming to me . . .', 'Satan is coming to me . . .'; He said: "The *prince of this world* cometh"—implying the whole principle of this world, as Satan's Kingdom; the self-principle of the prince of this world. But—"he hath nothing in me."

THE POSITIVE SIDE: COMMITTED TO THE WILL OF THE FATHER

That, then, is the negative side of His life. The positive aspect was that He was so utterly com-

mitted to the will of His Father. He was not *only* refusing, resisting, repressing, suppressing, putting away. The motive of it all was His absolute committal to the will of the Father. The will of the Father was the dominant thing, the most positive reality in His life, from beginning to end. And the will of the Father came down to every detail in the most meticulous way. This was established in His whole life on the earth.

It was established first in the thirty years of what we call His private life. Those thirty years were also divided into two. You notice that division in the Gospel by Luke, chapter ii. First, from His dedication in the Temple until He reached the age of twelve years: this is what is said over this section: "And the child grew, and waxed strong, becoming full of wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him" (v. 40). Then from the age of twelve onwards: "And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in grace with God and men" (v. 52). We will not now stop to analyse that. It is subject to an analysis which is very profitable, if you care to make it. You see the realms in which this progress was made—physical, mental and spiritual; and over all the verdict is: the grace of God. The grace of God, the Divine approval, Divine satisfaction, was over His life. He was growing up before the Lord as one well-pleasing. Why? Right at the very heart: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"—or, if you like the alternative translation, "that I must be in my Father's house?" (v. 49). Whatever that meant, it certainly meant a Father-consciousness above the ordinary, natural relationship. Note that it is set right in the midst of something that caused a good deal of heart-burning and perplexity to his parents after the flesh.

Yes, there was an utter committal to the will of His Father, and it was established for thirty years in the ordinary, common way of life. I think that is a tremendous thing. Why were there thirty years in silence and in secret so far as we are concerned? We have so little light upon it. Why? Just for that same reason. If you want the explanation, go back to the Old Testament. You remember that the Levites commenced their service at the age of thirty years. Luke tells us about Jesus beginning His ministry: "Jesus . . . when he began . . . was about thirty years of age . . ." (Luke iii. 23). The Lord Jesus was in type a Levite, although he came of the tribe of Judah. (Compare Heb. vii. 13, 14.) But the official entry of a Levite into his ministry at the age of thirty was never willy-nilly. There was a history lying behind this. The Levite history, the Levite life, the Levite behaviour lay behind it.

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And, although we have nothing that makes this quite clear to us, perhaps because there was never any occasion for it, I venture to say that, if any young man of the tribe of Levi in that old dispensation had been living a profligate life, he would never have become an officiating Levite upon reaching the age of thirty years. No, the seal had to be set upon those thirty years, that the man had walked before God. And the same principle was brought to bear in the life of Jesus; God tested Him, proved Him, in the ordinary ways of life.

That ought to be taken by us very seriously, as a principle of God's approval. You may be longing to get out into ministry: God may be longing for you to be *fit* to be brought out into ministry! In all the ordinary ways of life you are going through it, you are being tested; the eye of God is upon you. Remember that when Jesus, at thirty years of age, came to the Jordan, Heaven was opened and a voice said: "In thee I am well pleased" (Mark i. 11). I think that covered the thirty years: it spoke of the grace of God in thirty years of ordinary life, and made it possible for Him to take up His ministry. Perhaps we are not so right in saying 'ordinary life', seeing how the Devil tried to get Him right at the beginning (Matt. ii. 13 - 18).

But, whatever the thirty years represented, there is no question that the three-and-a-half years' public ministry ratified, through intense fires, the fact that He was committed without any reservation to the will of His Father. Those three-and-a-half years were a period of the intensest fires, to make Him deviate a little bit, in personal, self-consideration, from doing His Father's will. By every bribe of 'the kingdoms of this world and the glory thereof', and by every threat of the ignominy of the Cross, Satan sought to bring about this deviation from the will of God. Jesus fought it through to the end.

THE REALITY OF HIS HUMANITY

Why the earthly life? First of all, to establish the reality of His humanity. You see, in the old dispensation there had been many Divine appearances in human form. No one dare be dogmatic on this matter, but it may well have been that the very Son of God Himself was in some of those so-called 'theophanies'. God came in human form, so that those visited first spoke of them as men, or a man, and then woke up to the realisation: 'I have seen God—God was here!' But this earthly life of thirty-three years was no theophany: this was real humanity. This was not a transient guise,

a passing form, just a visitation. This was a man, true humanity, on this earth for over thirty-three years. This was not an angelic visitor. It was a man. And I think this is one reason or explanation, amongst others, why at His entry into the world He was born as a babe and started from the beginning. He did not arrive as a visitant in full maturity; He began right at the beginning, coming in—although with a difference—yet by the same door as other men, and living here, through infancy, childhood and youth, into manhood, accepting a life on the basis of absolute dependence on God as other men.

If you think, you will see that there is so much that bears this out. Why must He in infancy be hurried away by Joseph and Mary, out of the country, because His life is sought after? Why does not Heaven come in and assert itself for His absolute protection in miraculous ways, in order to preserve Him and to meet those forces that were against Him? Whereas He had to be taken and run away with, be got out of the way, like any other child! The fact is that He is living our life, He is subject to our experiences. There may be miraculous elements working behind, but on the face of things He is hungry, He is thirsty, He is tired, He is pursued and sought after—He is 'going through it', in the same way as you and I. He is living a human life. He has voluntarily accepted the basis of absolute dependence upon His Father. And the Father is not performing a series of miracles—although in truth the whole thing is a miracle.

A LIFE OF FAITH

For this reason, like other men, He has got to overcome by the principle of faith. He has no other life, in principle, than you and I have: it is the life of faith. Faith had to be exercised *for* Him before He could exercise it for Himself. I have no doubt that Joseph and Mary had considerable exercise about that matter. They had to look it squarely in the face, and either say, 'Well, we can trust God to look after Him: we will not do anything, we will just trust God'; or else say, 'We will go, and trust God'. In either case, it was faith—faith *for* Him. And then the time came for Him to exercise faith for Himself, and *everything* for Him had to be on the basis of faith, as much as it has for you and for me.

Are you thinking: 'What about His deity? What about His miraculous powers of knowledge and action? Surely He *knew* in a supernatural way; He exercised powers quite supernatural. That is

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not humanity!’ Let us get this very definitely cleared up in our minds. It does not contradict anything that I have said. Note: *Jesus never used His miraculous powers of Deity for Himself*. There is only one instance which it might be thought could be set over against that statement: the occasion when He had no money to pay His taxes, and sent Peter down to the sea-shore, and there was a fish with a coin in its mouth (Matt. xvii. 24–27). You might say, ‘It would be very nice to have that power to pay our rates!’ Ah, but be careful—it is not quite as clear as that. It does not really contradict what I have said. He never used *supernatural, Godhead powers* for Himself, and they never took Him off the ground of dependence upon God and the basis of faith. Note that even in that one instance there was no creative action. It was superior intelligence. There was a fish, and that fish had a coin, and somehow He knew it was there.

UNBELIEF UNTOUCHED BY MIRACLES

But let us pursue that. Take the miracles. The miracles related, on the one side, to His Deity: but, even so, they did not have a character-changing effect upon the people who saw them or participated in them. They were but for a testimony to who He was. Do you get the significance of that? With all His miracles, in the end the principle of unbelief has not been rooted out of a single individual! That is the tragedy of it all. That is a tremendous argument. Though they saw all that He did, the deep-rooted unbelief was untouched. The amazing thing—even with the disciples themselves—was that they were still capable of deep-seated unbelief. “O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe . . . !” (Luke xxiv. 25). “He upbraided them with their unbelief . . .” (Mark xvi. 14). With all that they saw, it did not touch character, it did not touch their nature.

It was, therefore, given but for a testimony—a testimony as to who He was. That is one side. For, you see, there are two sides to this matter. There is the side of His Deity, as John sums up everything: “These [things] are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name” (John xx. 31). It was for a testimony to who He was essentially. But withal, it did not have such an effect upon their natures that because of these things they got rid of unbelief. Yes—for a moment they may have believed on Him; but that is something less than having unbelief deeply and radically dealt with. The miracles did not do that, and Jesus did not expect that they would. He made it per-

fectly clear that He was not building upon His miracles any hope in that direction. He was still dependent upon the Father for the real effect.

And here let me say, in parenthesis—it is something to think about—that it is not the things that He does *for us*, but *the life of the Son of Man*, in all its mighty potency, its power, its principle, *in us*, that makes the difference. He might heal your body of a chronic disease, of something that is most certainly going to prove fatal in the ordinary way, but that does not necessarily mean that the deep-seated unbelief of your heart will be dealt with. After a few years you might argue or explain that away psychologically, or in some other way, and lose the real impact of it. No, those things done *for us*, in any realm, even though they might seem miracles, do not touch our real nature. Make no mistake: signs and wonders are not the ultimate argument—they are not. The ultimate argument is the change of our very being, deep-seated and deep-rooted, and anything that does not do that has failed of the ultimate purpose of His coming. It is not what He would do *for us*, miraculously, by outward things: it is what He Himself is *in us*, as another kind of person. That is what matters. It is “Christ *in you*, the hope of glory”; not Christ working miracles *for you*.

THE SUPERIOR POWERS OF MAN AS GOD INTENDED HIM

But then, there is something yet more to be said. He did have superior powers for doing and for knowing. While I am not for a moment suggesting that that had nothing to do with His Deity, His Divine nature, it might very well be that that superior—what we might call supernatural—power and intelligence were, if I may put it this way, the ‘normal’ of the kind of being that Jesus is, *as man*. If, without any question of participation in Deity, a man or men can be brought into such a relationship with God as that which He had, they, too, might have that superior intelligence, and might know a great deal more than the ordinary person knows of what is taking place in the world around. It would not be just through psychic means, but by the very intuition of a spirit link with God. I venture to suggest that—putting aside all that is psychical—such power is not absolutely unknown to Christian men and women. Peter raised the dead; the Apostles healed the sick, performed miracles. Were they God? No, but by the Spirit of Jesus Christ they were brought into such a relationship with Him as to have His powers delegated to them. “Greater works than these shall

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he do ; because I go unto the Father ” (John xiv. 12).

There is a deep significance in a word that He uttered, as recorded for us in John v. 26, 27. It is perhaps far too deep for our understanding, and I do not venture into those depths. “The Father . . . gave . . . to the Son . . . authority to execute judgement, because he is the Son of man.” Not because He is the Son of God—“because he is the Son of man”. It opens a very big field of enquiry, and we will not enter it ; but my point is this : that, Deity apart—I am not arguing for a moment against the Deity of Christ in knowledge or power, supernatural ability—may it not be that a humanity so related to and so indwelt by God, according to His original mind, should have these powers which we now call ‘super-natural’? It only means ‘of another order of intelligence’, of knowledge, of ability to do. It means that man is lifted on to another level of ability and understanding, above the ordinary level of man as we know him. Is this not true of the gifts of the Holy Ghost given to the Church?

Why, then, the earthly life? To set forth the kind of humanity that God wants, to demonstrate through a human life what man would be if God had him after His own heart. I believe that is the

answer. And if it was but thirty-three-and-a-half years, what does that say? Coming over the centuries I hear the prophet’s voice saying: “He was cut off out of the land of the living” (Is. liii. 8); “His life is taken from the earth” (Acts viii. 33). His life was cut off in mid-manhood. Men did not let Him finish it. *Men* took action that this should not go on. *Men* brought it to—yes, from one standpoint—an untimely end. Ah, Satan will not have this kind of man here longer than he can help.

But this kind of man can only be completed on the other side. We anticipate our ‘octave’ when we just hint that He has not left His manhood, He has not left His humanity ; He abides there, on the other side, as Man. But He has done *here* all that was needed. He has demonstrated what man would be if God had Him according to His mind. And He has taken action that the rest of the prophecy shall be fulfilled: “He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days” (Is. liii. 10). He was cut off, but He shall prolong His days: the days of His humanity are prolonged in His Church. That is what we are called to. By painfully slow processes, owing to the infirmity of our flesh, He is working to make us men and women after His own kind. And the heart of it all is: the complete severance from the principle of the self-life.

T. A-S.

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Genesis iii. 15).

“Now there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel: for the Philistines said, Lest the Hebrews make them swords or spears: but all the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his share, and his coulter, and his axe, and his mattock” (I Samuel xiii. 19, 20).

“This charge I commit unto thee, my child Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that by them thou mayest war the good warfare” (I Timothy i. 18).

“Fight the good fight of the faith, lay hold on the life eternal, whereunto thou wast called” (I Timothy vi. 12).

THE very first of these passages informs us, if we need to be informed, that there is an enmity in the very constitution of things. There are really only two sets of people in creation and in the universe: ‘the seed of Satan’, whether they be men or

demons, and ‘the seed of Christ’; and, in the very constitution of things, there is enmity between these two. It is in the human race; we know that well. There is that within human nature that is enmity both against God and against those who are of God, or of Christ. We know that we live in a universe which is shot through and through with enmity, with hostility. It goes beyond humanity; it is in the very heavens, this warfare; it is spiritual, back of everything else.

Now, of course, that is a very big subject; we only have one fragment of it all that we want to underline at this time. But we need continually to keep this fact in mind. I think so often we are at a discount, we are weakened, because we still have some element of surprise or wonder about it. Why all this we experience, this stress, this pressure, this antagonism, this conflict? We need to settle it completely, once and for all, that it is in the very constitution of things; and, until the constitution of things is changed, with a new heaven and a new earth, it will continue; it will always be with us. By our very first birth we are brought into a realm of conflict; it is in us; then we are brought

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into it in another direction by our new birth, and we begin to know something more about it than we ever did before. It is something that we have really to settle, as a fact, and it is going on to the end.

This is not a very comforting thought, I know ; it may sound very depressing. But much of our defeat is because we have not really settled this matter. Let it be understood that we are going to remain in spiritual conflict right through to the end. It will always be so, and so we had better adjust to it, and recognise that it is here. We are in a warfare between two great spiritual systems headed by two great leaders. On the one side there is Satan and his vast hosts ; as Paul calls them, ' hosts of wicked spirits '. On the other side, there is our Lord Jesus, and He has His hosts also. And these two are set in deadly array.

THE ENEMY'S STRATEGY

We need, however, to know and recognise not only the fact, but something as to the strategy of each leader. As to Satan, his supreme strategy is *to neutralise the fighting spirit*. Take note of that ! There is a little illustration of it in the passage we read from Samuel. The Philistines were always seeking to neutralise the testimony of Israel. Their strategy was just to rob Israel of all fighting weapons, take all their weapons away, so that they could not fight ; they had nothing to fight with. That is the supreme strategy of the enemy—to neutralise the fighting spirit of the people of God.

The ways in which that is done are almost countless. He will paralyse by seeking to overwhelm with ostentatious demonstrations of power and influence, and to create in the Lord's people a feeling that the enemy is greater than the Lord. If the enemy cannot bring us to believe that he does not exist at all, he will do everything to make us believe that he ' extra ' exists—that is, that he is more than he really is. He puts on ostentatious demonstrations to make us succumb to the feeling that he is too great for us, the forces against us are too mighty. Of course, that is not true ; but, if we allow it to get in, it can take the fight out of us, and that is what it is for.

Or again, he will neutralise the fighting spirit by introducing paralysing confusion, raising questions, getting divided minds, thus breeding mistrust, uncertainty, and doubt ; and when that is in, all our security is gone. We are finished if the enemy can succeed in turning us in on ourselves and our own problems, and raising these distracting questions. The fighting spirit will soon go out.

Or again (and we are keeping in every case very

close to the Scriptures, which we could cite in each connection), he will bring in some paralysing corruption, some secret, hidden sin amongst the Lord's people ; something of which he can truly accuse them before the Lord. There is a great deal, of course, of that which he does, which is not right ; but he knows very well that, if only he can get in something that is questionable or wrong amongst the Lord's people, the Lord cannot stand with them. The Lord is arrested in His support, cannot commit Himself, if there is any kind of questionable or corrupting element of life or conduct.

We could spend much time enumerating the ways in which the enemy seeks to destroy the fighting spirit amongst the Lord's people. But although we could not cover the whole of that ground, though we spent much time on it, let us take note of this : If the fighting spirit has gone out of us, it means that the enemy has gained a tremendous advantage ; somewhere the enemy is succeeding. The enemy dreads, more than anything else, a people who are girt to battle, who are on their feet for the fight.

THE LORD'S STRATEGY

On the other hand, there is the strategy of the Lord. Now, we usually make our appeal to the Lord to move in and fight for us, and to settle the issue ; and, just as usually, we do not find that the Lord does it. The Lord cannot stand with a doubting people : a people who have been caught in any kind of unbelief, or doubt, or question. The one thing the Lord does demand is that we know where we stand, on what ground we stand, and that in our hearts there be a deep assurance, a quiet, deep, steady confidence—we have no doubt. A doubting people, a questioning people, is a paralysed people : the Lord requires that we be an assured people : that we know where we are, and we know where we are going, and we know the ground on which we stand.

The Lord demands a united people. The Lord can never stand with, and fight for, a divided people. It is the work of the enemy to divide. It is the Lord's strategy to bring about a complete oneness, a unity : His power lies in that direction, and victory lies in that direction—that we are altogether ; we are as one man, of one heart, of one mind, of one will. It is essential. The Lord has spoken so much about this in the Word—to have a people who are of one heart. It is the absolute necessity to victory over the enemy.

Again, it is essential to victory that we have one single vision and purpose. ' Where there is no vision, the people disintegrate ' (Prov. xxix. 18) ;

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where there is divided vision, there is no solid power of countering the enemy. No, we must be a people with a single vision ; we must know what it is the Lord is after in our time, in this world—really what it is that is the end of God, toward which He is committed ; and we must be in line with that. Oh, how important it is that we have God's vision for the time, and be under its mighty government. A people of vision means a people of distinct and definite purpose. If we do not know, if we have any uncertainty, if we are not clear, as to why we are, and for what we are, we shall be a defeated people ; we shall be held up all the time. It was always like that with Israel. When they lost their vision of that for which God had called them, for which He had brought them out, they just went round in circles ; they were a neutralised people. There must be an all-consuming purpose.

You remember how—and there are many illustrations of this in the Word of God—whenever the Lord's people began to settle down and take their ease, and ceased to be aggressive and positive, something always went wrong. It was so when they got into the Land, before they had completely turned out their enemies : they began to settle down. You know what followed. It was so even with David. " At the time when kings go out to battle ", instead of going out to battle, he " tarried at Jerusalem "; and you know what happened (II Sam. xi). Likewise with Solomon : it seemed as though there was no more fighting to be done ; it seemed that all the nations round about were now subdued. But the enemy did not think so ! Just when everything seemed to be so nice and good, it says : " And Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter . . ." (I Kings iii. 1). How subtle ! You know all that followed in Israel. It was not long after Solomon that the kingdom was divided, followed by all that long, terrible story ; the tragedy of king following king in apostasy, in disaster, in death.

No, diligence, the ' fervent spirit ', is a very great factor in warfare. We must not be a people without motive, without purpose, without having our lives absorbed in some object. Oh, this work of the enemy, to rob our lives of a sense of motive, of some great enough thing for which to live and work ; to weaken our hands that they hang down. We shall soon be a neutralised people if it is like that. There must be a positiveness—as Paul puts it : " Always abounding in the work of the Lord " (I Cor. xv. 58). The person who has not his hands full enough of purpose in life is a person who is open to every kind of assault. Even in the natural realm that is true : you are far happier if you are

busy than if you are doing nothing ; far more victorious in life if you are doing something, getting on with something, whatever it may be. As soon as you stop and sit down (unless of course it be from fatigue), you know how things begin to crowd into the mind, and in other ways ; you will soon be caught up in worries and troubles. But in the spiritual realm, this is a very important thing : " in diligence not slothful ; fervent in spirit " (Rom. xii. 11) ; a people like those of old, who ' have a mind to work ' (Neh. iv. 6).

THE BATTLE FOR LIFE

Now, if you look again at the Word, you will see that all spiritual progress, all increase of spiritual measure, came to the Lord's people along the line of battle ; and it is still like that. But what is the focal point of this whole contest, this whole battle? Upon what does it all turn? Just one thing : *life*. It is the battle over life. Make no mistake about it, that is the issue upon which the enemy is focusing all his attention. In all his countless schemes, of neutralising and putting out of the fight, his objective is that *life*, against which he moved at the beginning. His whole success will depend upon *death*. If he can bring death in, in any form whatever, he has succeeded ; and on the other hand, the whole triumph of the Lord's people is in the one connection of *life*.

We have said that all spiritual progress is a matter of knowing Him ever more in the power of His resurrection. Every fresh step in spiritual progress comes out of a crisis, and that crisis is one in which a fresh knowledge of the power of His resurrection is the only thing for our salvation. That is a very hopeful thing. If to-day you and I are more conscious than ever, both personally and collectively, of the need of a new, mighty incoming of the power of His resurrection, it may be that the Lord has precipitated a crisis in order that there shall be more of that Divine life than ever. It has always been like that. Israel's coming out to be the Lord's people, with the inheritance in view, was through a crisis of death and resurrection ; their moving into the Land, into the inheritance, was on another crisis of death and resurrection. All progress, all increase, is in this battle between death and life, life and death.

And so we come to this word : ' Fight . . . Lay hold on eternal life.' Now, we know that eternal life is a gift in response to faith in the Lord Jesus. It is a gift, but that is not the end of the story. When it has been given, it becomes the battleground for the rest of the experience of the Christ-

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

ian ; right through to the end, that very life is the battle-ground of all true Christians. If it can by any means be neutralised, made inoperative, arrested, Satan will do it ; that is his object. On the other hand, the Lord's object is to make us, with Paul, ' know Him, and the power of His resurrection ', in ever greater fulness. If ever a man knew the power of His resurrection, it was Paul, through many, many deadly conflicts, terrible battles and deep experiences ; and yet, in his last writings, right at the end of his long, full experience of knowing resurrection upon resurrection, he still says: ' That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection ' (Phil. iii. 10). It is as much as to say: ' I don't know all that there is to know of that yet. I know a lot, but there is much more to know of that yet.'

And to Timothy, much about the same time, Paul writes: " Lay hold on the life eternal." That is where I would put the emphasis. Do not just passively rest upon the fact that through faith in Jesus Christ you have eternal life. Remember

that, from day to day, that life is to conquer ; it is to be the basis of your very survival ; it is to be the very means of your daily overcoming. It has to be the ground of your physical life, as well as your spiritual life: for body, you must lay hold on that life ; for victory, you must lay hold on that life. Would that we knew more about this in our prayer gatherings—really laying hold for victory, laying hold for the overthrow of the enemy—this positive taking hold, in spirit, of life. This is the battle ; this is the very nature of things. In all this terrible welter in which we find ourselves, we have not, on the one hand, to accept it as inevitable, things being as they are ; nor, on the other hand, to have a merely passive faith that, in the end, the Lord will triumph. Between those two, there is all this in the Word of God about our being *positive*, about our *laying hold* ; about our attitude—on the one side, of refusing ; on the other side, of laying hold of God's end.

The Lord save our fighting spirit, and ' teach our hands to war, our fingers to fight!' (Ps. cxliv. 1).

T. A-S.

THE first phase of our spiritual experience may be a great and overflowing joy, with a marvellous sense of emancipation. In this phase extravagant things are often said as to total deliverance and final victory. An earnest of the ultimate is often given with the incoming of the Holy Spirit. He is that earnest, and His advent in the human spirit is celebrated with glory. Then there may, and often does, come a phase of which inward conflict is the chief feature. It may be very much of a Roman's Seven experience. This will lead under the Lord's hand to several things ; firstly, to the fuller knowledge of the meaning of identification with Christ, as in Romans Six. Happy the man who has been instructed in this from the beginning.

SELECTED

With Christ.

The many of our friends who have either been at Honor Oak, or have received literature by mail, will have valued the contact with our beloved brother K. P. Oliphant. Our brother went to the Lord on 30th September, after over thirty years of fellowship with us. A brother greatly beloved by all who knew him, and a faithful servant of Jesus Christ.

PLEASE NOTICE.

It has been decided not to hold the usual special meetings in January at Honor Oak.

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