

Page 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 85  
105

Cleo Jones

105-

# **A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY**



JANUARY — FEBRUARY, 1963.

Vol. 41. No. 1.

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL ... ..	1	HORIZONED BY RESURRECTION ... ..	12
STEPHEN—THY WITNESS ... ..	2	THE CROSS GIVES THE TRUE ESTIMATE OF THE	
BE STILL, AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD ... ..	6	LOVE OF GOD ... ..	15
THE STEWARDSHIP OF THE MYSTERY (IV <i>cont.</i> )	9	LEADERSHIP (III) ... ..	16
FOR BOYS AND GIRLS ... ..	11	THE PASSION OF THE CHURCH ... ..	19
		A RIGHT THING IN A WRONG WAY ... ..	20

EDITORIAL

30, Dunoon Road,  
Forest Hill,  
London, S.E. 23.

Dear Fellow-members of Christ,

With this issue of *A Witness and a Testimony* we commence its thirty-seventh year of ministry. Firstly we acknowledge the faithful mercy and grace of the One who called us to it, in the wonderful way in which He has sustained and provided all through these years ; years fraught with no small conflict, pressure, and deep history. Quite a volume could be written of the experiences of this large segment of a lifetime. We can truly say with the Apostle: "Having received the help which comes from God, we continue unto this day"; and we are not saying a small thing when we say that.

We began with a vision. We believe that it was a God-given vision. This belief has been supported by many evidences, seeing that we have never made any *effort* at propaganda or advertisement. The vision was of a ministry *in* and *through* a Centre to which and from which the Lord's people of all the world could come and go with a fuller knowledge and enrichment of Himself. Into this vision the Lord brought others who have gone to many parts carrying—not another's ministry or vision,



## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

but—what the Lord has shown to them, and led them into. We have steadfastly endeavoured to keep this ministry available to *all* the Lord's people, and avoid anything that is in the nature of exclusiveness, separateness, or sectarianism. With the advance of years changes in personnel, understanding, and apprehension are inevitable, but, so far as this paper is concerned, we hope to maintain its original purpose ; but, we trust, with growing richness, until its mission is terminated. We pray that it may ever be bread for the hungry ; life in the battle with death ; light for those who seek it ; and—in all—a contribution to that one heart-purpose of the Father, the fulness of His Son, our Lord Jesus.

We do truly thank all who have given, and continue to give, their spiritual as well as material support. We are very slow to believe that we count for much, but, if the letters we receive from so many, are to be taken seriously, there would be reason to believe that the labour and battle is not in vain.

May the Lord make 1963 a year of great increase *to—and of—*Himself.

Yours in His grace,

T. AUSTIN-SPARKS.

P.S. I should be very grateful for special prayer for guidance in these coming months. It would seem that ministry at Honor Oak can now be fully assumed by other brothers and that my own way would be further afield, if the Lord still needs this voice. Another period in the United States seems probable in the immediate future.

## STEPHEN—THY WITNESS

*Acts xxii. 20 (Acts vi - vii).*

## AN APPEAL FOR SPIRITUAL CHRISTIANITY

IT would be difficult to find a Christian who did not hold Stephen in very high esteem. The reading of the account of his martyrdom, as that of a young man of great gifts and unimpeachable character, stirs every kind of emotion into intense reaction. Sorrow, grief, admiration, anger, contempt, hatred, are all mingled in the tears which are very near when we hear his last words and see his last look. Our heads go down when we seem to see in the darkness of the night the torches of the "devout men" and hear their hushed tread as they go out to recover and bury that mangled body—"And devout men buried Stephen, and made great lamentation over him". A young, brilliant, brave, and beautiful life has been taken away by brutal, vicious, bestial fury. The cause we shall examine, but view the event.

True, Stephen had flung some serious charges at the Jewish rulers present. He had supported those charges by long Jewish history and Scripture, but

prejudice will never listen to the best documented argument. So, at a given point, they stopped their ears, gnashed at him with their teeth, and rushed upon him, dragging him outside the city. The place for stoning was a ramp higher than a man. The first witness against Stephen threw him from the ramp in such a way that he fell on his back. Then a large stone was thrown with great force on his heart. The blow did not kill him, so, according to the Law (Deut. xvii. 7) it was the people's turn. The men took off their white mantles and laid them at the feet of Saul, who was present in an official capacity to support the proceedings. The stones rained upon Stephen who, at a point, raised himself to his knees and prayed for their forgiveness, and, as the horrible work reached its climax, he just said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." The deed was done. The mangled body lay motionless.

But, from that point, we have to begin our enquiry. What did it all amount to? What was

JANUARY — FEBRUARY, 1963.

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF STEPHEN?

Was Stephen just the first martyr for the faith, to be followed by many more, and so to be *just one* of the Noble Army of the Martyrs? Or was there something special and different about Stephen? We answer that in an affirmation, and then proceed to uncover that particular significance.

Stephen was making spiritual history. What Stephen was fighting for to the very death was something in Christianity that even the chief Apostles—Peter, James, John, and the rest—had not yet seen and come to. It was something different, even in Christianity.

That is the affirmation; now for the explanation. The explanation will be found, firstly in his own discourse, and then in what eventuated from his death.

### 1. STEPHEN'S DISCOURSE

In his discourse to the Jewish rulers and his other accusers, Stephen ranged the history of Israel with a single definite thought and object before him. He started with their racial or national father, Abraham, and went on through Isaac; Jacob; Joseph; Moses; the people—in Egypt; the Exodus; the Wilderness; Joshua; David; Solomon; the Prophets.

In what he had to say about all these, one feature and factor runs through all and was governing everything. That factor is that God is ever moving on, and that nothing but disaster can come to those who do not go on with Him. This going on of God, Stephen pointed out, was not just in the progress of history, even the history of a chosen people; it was more essentially a spiritual going on. To Abraham the command was "Get out"; and then, *when* he was out, a life of pilgrimage to the end; no settling down or taking root. Stephen is quite detailed on this.

When, through Jacob, the national family and potentially the twelve tribes were secured and the possibility of a stop, an arrest, and death by famine was threatening, the continuance and going on was secured by Divine sovereignty as told in the fascinating story of the life of Joseph. From Joseph Stephen went on to Moses—his birth, preservation, education, escape, commission, and the Exodus. God was going on.

At this point some of the strongest and most terrible things are said by Stephen. He is dealing with Israel in the wilderness and he exposes the hidden causes of retarded progress.

Remember that progress is Stephen's subject: God was ever moving on and man ever contrary. Stephen indicates that the retarded progress and the extension of a few days into forty years was due to one thing; it was that, while they were out of Egypt, Egypt was not out of them. Not only were they ever literally looking back to Egypt and inclining to return there, but the spirit and principle of idolatry was still strongly in their hearts. This came out in the demand for the golden calf; but Stephen—quoting Amos—said something even more terrible, namely, that, in some mystic way, the very Tabernacle and Temple were, in their souls, associated with Moloch and Rephan—gods of the stellar bodies; and their sacrifices had the same subtle link. While ostensibly Jehovah was the object of worship, actually He was mixed up, in their worship, with other gods. If this is what Stephen meant and what Amos was actually dealing with when this thing in the heart had come out to find exposure in the latter days of the Monarchy, it fully justifies his charge of 'resisting the Holy Ghost'.

But Stephen goes on far beyond the wilderness with the same people. He touches lightly on Joshua, but implies the same spirit. We know that Joshua in type postulated God's movement, ever on, ever up: the going on to exploit the inheritance ever more fully. But, again, that incorrigible disposition to settle down too soon and not go on to fullness marked and marred the history of the conquest.

On Stephen goes to David and to Solomon. David's desire to build a house for God on earth received a very reserved and non-committal response from Him, and was met with the answer that God would build a house of a different order, for

"The Most High dwelleth not in houses made with hands . . ."

The heaven is my throne,  
And the earth the footstool of my feet:  
What manner of house will ye build me?  
saith the Lord:

Or what is the place of my rest?  
Did not my hand make all these things?"

(Acts vii. 48, 49).

What Stephen saw, and what is stated, intimated, and implicit in the New Testament (a monumental document on the matter is 'the Letter to the Hebrews'), was that Solomon was—at most—but a figure of a greater 'Son', and his Temple, with all its glory, wealth, and beauty, only a pointer



## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

onward to "A house not made with hands"; what Peter—after a difficult and painful transition—called, God's *spiritual* house.

Stephen concludes with a comprehensive gathering of all this history into "the Prophets", and virtually says that the spirit of prophecy was related to this ever-future, onward, and ultimate *spiritual* goal of God.

What again, then, does all this amount to? On the one side, it is a mighty exposure and denunciation of the incorrigible habit and disposition of *God's people* to bring what is essentially heavenly down to earth and fasten it there; to make of the spiritual something temporal; to make of the eternal something which will not—and cannot—abide; to make form, means, orders, and technique all-important. In a word, to have things fixed and boxed, so that the Holy Spirit is thwarted and frustrated in His ever-onward and ever-sovereign movement and innovation, if He so choose. The most dominant note, the most imperative cry of the New Testament is "Let us go on". But the context of this cry is—"outside the camp". The writer of those words in the Letter to the Hebrews, who has so much in common with Stephen, makes it abundantly clear that "outside the camp" means outside of all that which in its Judaistic nature systematizes and crystallizes *Christianity* into a set and settled form; into something earth-bound and final.

On the other side, all this is a revelation of how fierce and terrible will be the opposition of such systems to a purely and definitely *spiritual* testimony. Unless there is a conforming there will at least be ostracism, and at most martyrdom.

## 2. THE EFFECT OF STEPHEN'S TESTIMONY

Now we have to go back to Jerusalem and look into the real meaning and effect of Stephen's testimony, and consider its particular meaning for Christianity.

Stephen had—at the cost of his life—dared to touch the Temple, and the Temple as the heart and sum of the Jewish system and hierarchy. The effect of his pronouncement was to repudiate that whole system and its earthly centre. He had seen that it had been but a pointer to the heavenly and spiritual which was reached and realised in the entry of Jesus Christ into this world. He had been spiritually immanent in all the aspects of that system and that history, dominating all its features and represented in all its constituents. They had

never been the *reality*, the *essential*, but only ways and means by which the real was signified; they were signs not realities. That which they had signified had now come in fulness and finality, therefore, *earthly*, material, and localised Temples, Priests, Sacrifices, Vestments, Forms, Names and Titles, Cults, Orders, Times and Seasons, and everything else that made up such a system had, at least, served its purpose, and, at worst, become an empty shell, and a hindrance to the spiritual.

Stephen, in statement and implication, said this, and said it in no uncertain terms and manner. There was no equivocation in his declaration, and he made it quite clear that to have been blind to the spiritual significations of their history, and to continue in that blindness now that the One signified had come was nothing less than 'resisting the Holy Spirit'.

Very well, then, that is so far as Jewry was concerned; but there was a twilight transition period in Jerusalem. While the Apostles and disciples had seen that Jesus fulfilled so much of the Scriptures (as see Luke xxiv), they certainly had but a very limited apprehension of His full significance as to the old system. They were still 'going up to the Temple', and that, *at the hour of the sacrifice*.

Their last recorded question to the Lord before His ascension shows that they were still clinging to the Jewish hope of a temporal Messianic kingdom on the earth, in spite of His parable of the lord returning after *a long time*, and all His teaching on the Holy Spirit, etc.

Is that why, when those who stood on Stephen's ground were, after his death, "all scattered abroad", the Apostles were excepted. They had not wholly repudiated Judaism, circumcision, the Temple, the sacrifices, etc., as Stephen had.

Why did Saul of Tarsus immediately seek out, in Jerusalem (Acts ix. 13) and unto 'distant cities' (Acts xxvi. 11), those who had identified themselves with Stephen's position, and leave the Apostles alone? True, the Apostles were having a hard time with the rulers, but not on Stephen's ground. James seems to have been able to hold things together with a group on a partial Judaistic ground, a compromise; and Peter and John were, for some time, with him, as 'Acts' shows. In Jerusalem the Christian Church was largely Judaistic, within the covert of the Temple and the ordinances. But, the Holy Spirit was moving on, and a point is reached where it is *a question for Christianity* whether it was going on or going to stand still, which would mean going back.

The fact is that Stephen had caused a division—

JANUARY — FEBRUARY, 1963.

the first division—in Christianity, a division which has characterized Christianity right down the centuries into our own time.

The Holy Spirit was moving sovereignly toward a position of utter spirituality and heavenliness; the very essentials of Christ now being in Heaven and the Holy Spirit being here as the characteristic of this dispensation. Peter, himself, was caught up in that sovereign movement in the episode of the house of Cornelius. He prevaricated under the influence of James and "certain" others; but his letters show that he made the transition. This was also abundantly true of John.

But the great event in the sovereign movement of the Holy Spirit was the 'apprehending' of the super-Stephen, Saul of Tarsus. It was he who, in the seeing of Christ in a blaze of illumination, saw all the implications of Stephen's testimony. Henceforth the battle between both the immovable Judaisers and the twilight Christians on the one hand, and an utterly spiritual Church and Christianity, on the other, would focus upon him, until that full revelation had been embodied in his letters and he also fell fighting. Paul's spiritual position, as opposed to a temporal or a semi-mundane system was called "a heresy" (Acts xxiv. 24, margin), and was referred to as a "sect which is everywhere spoken against" (Acts xxviii. 22).

If we are prepared to call Paul's position a "heresy" or a "sect", let us remember that it was that for which Stephen died, and let us see clearly what he and his great successor really stood for, and for which he died. It is something very searching. It reached the first Apostles. It sifted the Church at its beginning. It lies at the root of very much Christian history. It explains many spiritual tragedies. It accounts for much loss of power. It is the meaning of much talk about 'schism', 'sectarianism' and 'divisiveness'.

It would be a vain hope to expect that all Christians—even evangelical Christians—would see the distinction that is presented, or that, if they did see it, would pay the price of accepting it. But there is no doubt or question that the most vital consequences for Christianity are bound up with this issue.

Shall we continue in or revert to what is *virtually* a semi-Judaistic Christianity: an earth-tied, man-managed, system? Shall we fall into that pseudo-spiritual mistake which leads only to limitation—

at least; the mistake of collecting from the New Testament, either in actualities or by deductions, certain forms and procedures, 'methods' and technicalities, and shaping them into a 'New Testament' formula, 'blue-print', and 'pattern'? Shall we attempt that vain thing of making a fixed mould from 'New Testament methods' and pour everything into it? Shall we constitute *our* churches on the basis of popular votes, majorities against minorities, natural selection, etc., etc.

Or shall we see what Stephen and Paul saw, that the only Prototype of the Church and the churches is Christ Himself; that the revelation of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit is the only true way of building: that the anointing of the Holy Spirit and the qualification by spiritual gift is the Divine way of 'office', function, and responsibility: that this is the true *organism* springing and forming out of spiritual *life*: that it is conception and not imitation, birth and not manufacture: that prayer and definite guidance coming out of it and not the 'Board Room' or its equivalent is the Holy Spirit's 'method'?

Stephen was the only one in the New Testament who used Christ's chosen title for Himself—"the Son of man", and in that designation all the universality and super-national, super-denominational, and super-racial features are embodied.

What we have written *can* be a key to the Bible, especially the New Testament, and while we believe profoundly that it represents the mind of the Spirit, we can only trust that there will be found a sufficient spiritual concern to lead to a re-reading of Scripture with Stephen's testimony in mind.

No one, we trust, will think that there is any intention of *forcing* division in mind or act. As we said in our heading, this is an appeal for spiritual Christianity. Christianity has had, and still has, its battles with heathenism and paganism, and this has meant many martyrs. But this does it no spiritual harm. Where real harm is done and loss is suffered is in the battle within itself against retrogression, downward spiritual gravitation, traditionalism, legalism, and natural-mindedness. It is the battle against superficiality; which often masquerades as 'simplicity', a fear of depth.

Yes, this battle is a costly one, and has not infrequently brought the heavy stones against those who have stood for the essential spiritual character of this dispensation.

T. A-S.

## WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

## BE STILL, AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD

*Be still, and know that I am God" (Ps. xlvi. 10).*

*In returning and rest shall ye be saved ; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength"*  
(Isaiah xxx. 15)

THE men who spoke these words were no mere theorists. They had personal proofs of the mighty working of God for those who wait upon Him and wait for Him. God Himself is no mere theorist. He is only interested in that which has vital and spiritual results. He invites us to know—that is, to prove—that He is indeed God almighty. He also shows us how we may come to this knowledge. It is by obeying His command, "Be still".

What does it mean to "be still"? Perhaps it will help us if we consider some occasions in which God's people passed through such experiences, times in which they were reduced to silence, and as a result had marvellous proofs that He is indeed the living God.

## VICTORY AT JERICHO

A notable instance of this was what took place at the fall of Jericho. When those great fortress-walls fell flat, it was abundantly evident that God is God. This, however, did not happen until God's people had first passed through the severe discipline of quietness and confidence. "And Joshua commanded the people, saying, Ye shall not shout nor let your voice be heard, neither shall any word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I bid you shout . . ." (Joshua vi. 10). In this threefold command Joshua insisted that the people were not to shout, not to converse, not even to whisper, while they continued their daily march around the citadel.

This seems to be a good illustration of the spiritual truth which we are seeking to grasp, for it makes it clear that to "be still" does not mean to be paralysed, to be idle, to be passive. For their silence was part of their activity of faith. Every day they rose early, and every day they walked right round Jericho's walls. But as they walked there was a special manner in which they had to proceed, they had to maintain complete silence. As they looked up at those massive fortifications, they must have been tempted to comment on their impossible task. This was not allowed. They may have

felt the kind of emotions which make us want to speak, to say something, to say anything, only to speak in order to keep up our spirits. This was also forbidden. Divine power is not produced by human optimism. Other matters may have sprung to their minds, the happenings of the past, or the prospects for the future. No! to begin to chatter would have dissipated their spiritual concentration, distracting them from the one issue in hand. Their march had to be in quietness and in confidence. They had to keep marching, but also they had to be still. The only sound was that of the trumpets, which were blown as a simple affirmation of faith in the Lord's power.

Such affirmations are a part, and a necessary part, of our quiet confidence in the Lord. But when we talk, it is so often to reason, to argue, to complain about failures or to offer suggestions as to what should be done. When God's people spend their time talking there is little or no evidence of God's power among them. They may decide to their satisfaction what is wrong. They may even know what is right. But they fail to know the one thing which matters, and that is that He is God. For that it is necessary to be still.

## THE VALLEY OF BLESSING

Another outstanding illustration of this principle was found in the experience of king Jehoshaphat, as described in II Chronicles xx. He and his people were in an extremely perilous situation. The king had, on a previous occasion, committed a very grave spiritual error, so grave that a prophet had met him with a stern rebuke, saying, "For this thing wrath is upon thee from the Lord" (II Chron. xix. 2). Nevertheless, Jehoshaphat had a sincere desire to please God, a thing which the Lord always looks for and appreciates when He finds it. When the news came of the impending great calamity (xx. 4), the king humbled himself, and called all the people to do the same.

As "All Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives, and their children", Jehoshaphat confessed, "We have no might against this great company . . . neither know we what to do". How different was this from his earlier impulsive offer to go and fight with Ahab (xviii. 3)! Then he had been full of self-confidence; now he openly admitted his complete inadequacy. Then his



JANUARY — FEBRUARY, 1963.

eyes had been on himself and on his allies ; now he was reduced to bare faith in God, looking only to Him (xx. 12).

For him there was no hope, except in the utter mercy of God. He had no merits to plead, no advice to offer, no strength to provide. It must be God or nothing. How the Lord delights to bless men when they are reduced to such straits! There, as they stood in lowliness of confessed need, the Spirit of God came on one of their number, and he stood up to give God's answer to Judah, to Jerusalem and to Jehoshaphat, "Ye shall not need to fight in this battle ; set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you . . ." (xx. 17).

So it proved. With the king's exhortation to accept this message, and believe in the Lord their God, the people moved out towards their enemies, singing, "Give thanks unto the Lord ; for his mercy endureth for ever". They were still, not with the frightened paralysis of unbelief, but with quiet confidence in the Lord of hosts who was with them. In their stillness, they proved that He is indeed God.

One of the great lessons of this incident is that we may, and must, hope in God's mercy. If Jehoshaphat had listened to Satanic accusations concerning his past he would either have tried to justify himself or been overwhelmed by despair. He did neither. When we humbly hope in God, then He takes up our case. The battle is not ours, but His, and though we may be both unworthy and inadequate, He is ready to prove His godhead to those who in simple faith obey His revealed Word.

#### AT CANA OF GALILEE

It might be thought that such illustrations are limited to the Old Testament, and are therefore very remote from our own circumstances. A study of the Gospels will show that the same principles obtained in New Testament days, and that the Lord Jesus called on men to obey the psalmist's command, to be still and know that He (Jesus) is true God.

The first of these which will spring to the mind of Bible students, is the turning of the water to wine at Cana of Galilee (John ii. 1 - 11). Once again human wisdom and resource were at a discount. We are told that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was present, but it seems probable that she was more or less in charge of the proceedings. At least she knew of the lack of wine when even the ruler of the feast was unaware of it, and it was she who felt

impelled to urge the Lord Jesus to do something for them.

Doubtless her words were well intentioned, yet they met a rebuke from the Lord. He could not work under her, nor would He act in compliance with her suggestions. His hour could not come until she had ceased from all such efforts and handed the whole affair over to Him. And this she did, with such happy results. "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it", she ordered the servants, making it clear that she was no longer in charge, nor need they expect any more orders from her. "It is better to leave the matter in my hands", the Lord Jesus had told her (v. 4, Weymouth). It is indeed, but how hard for our chafing spirits to accept that rebuke. How difficult it is for us to *be still!* By God's grace, Mary was able to do it, with the result that she and the disciples had their first glimpse of Christ's glory—they knew that He was God. So may we. First, though, we have to learn to cease from our own fretfulness and fuss, our own attempts to solve the problem, even from telling the Lord what we think He ought to do. Then, and only then, does His hour come, and His glory is seen.

#### IN THE WILDERNESS

This same Gospel of the fulness gives its own special account of the feeding of the five thousand. It lays stress that those hungry multitudes could only be fed if they first sat down. "Jesus said, Make the people sit down . . . So the men sat down . . . Jesus therefore . . . distributed to them that were sat down" (John vi. 10, 11). What does it mean, this reiteration of the fact that the miracle was not performed until all the five thousand were seated on the grass? Is it not a further example of the condition laid down by the psalmist for finding out by experience that He is God? "Be still!" Be still from your advice to send the people away! Be still from your questions as to why and how you should be asked to give them to eat! Be still from your arithmetical calculations about money required, and from your arguments that the five small loaves are so insufficient! "Be still, and know that I am God."

It was the disciples, as well as the multitudes, who needed to find a place of rest. Their agitation was doubtless well intentioned. It was the natural reaction in such a moment of stress. We modern disciples are no better than they, and often we ourselves are under pressure which though well meant can only move us from quiet confidence in our Lord. We are urged that we must act. We are told



## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

hat it is up to us. We are condemned for wanting to pray instead of doing something. There are always so many arguments which appear spiritual and which can be backed by suitable texts, but which are the opposite of what the psalmist calls for.

In *The Life of Hudson Taylor* we read of how his chief companion on pioneering journeys, Mr. Duncan, found himself stranded in Nanking, with no possibility of financial help reaching him. As the last piece of silver had to be changed, the anxious cook asked him what they should do when the money was all gone. "Do?", was Duncan's quiet reply; "We will trust in the Lord and do good, and verily we shall be fed." And so it proved. What was true in Palestine at the beginning of the era, was equally true in China in 1867, and it is still true in London in 1962. If we maintain our confidence, the Lord will display His power.

## PENTECOST

The Gospel period came to an end. It was followed by the new dispensation in which God's servants now have Divine power indwelling them by the Holy Spirit. Does this mean that the old basis of proving God has passed? Do the men of the New Covenant have to act in a different way? The answer is, No. The very same basis of proving the power and presence of God still holds. The book of the Acts will bring all the evidence we need to prove this point. We quote two examples, the first of them being Pentecost itself.

What were the disciples doing when the Spirit came so mightily upon them? Were they planning? Certainly not, for they evidently had no ideas of their own as to how the Lord's command to evangelize could be fulfilled. Were they discussing? No, not then! They had already talked a great deal about the composition of the apostolic band, and had discussed their sense of what the Scriptures taught in this connection. Whether or not they were right in feeling that it was incumbent on them to complete the Twelve, and whether their action in choosing Matthias was either correct or necessary, must remain a matter of opinion. In any case, by the time that the day of Pentecost had fully come, such considerations and actions had come to an end. They do not seem to have been talking to one another. Were they perhaps praying? We cannot say for certain, but it seems very doubtful. It is true that earlier they are described as continuing steadfastly in prayer (Acts i. 14), but we would

expect that if Jews were praying they would either be on their knees or on their feet. In this case we know that they were neither.

The sole indication given to us is the simple disclosure of the fact that they were sitting in the house (Acts ii. 2). Had they talked themselves to a standstill? It is quite possible. Had they exhausted the matters for prayer? Or better, had they prayed through to such an assurance that now they only had to wait confidently for the answer? We do not know. What we do know is that they were "sitting"—just sitting! That is all that the Holy Spirit sees fit to record. But evidently this was considered important enough to mention. Can it not be because this is in keeping with what we have already been saying? Is this because they were obeying the psalmist's exhortation to "Be still"? There is no doubt about the rest of his statement—"and know that I am God". There was a wonderful demonstration of how great God is, for as they sat in that house, there came to this earth one of the most astounding evidences of the reality of the Divine presence that has ever taken place. "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost." In the days that followed there was no lack of action. The disciples were busy enough. But the action was Divine action, it proved that God is God, and it came to those who had first learned to be silent in His presence.

## PETER IN PRISON

From Pentecost until to-day, this same spiritual experience has been repeated again and again. Peter himself proved the power of God in a remarkable way, as in this spirit he waited patiently for the Lord. His own words were, "Now I know of a truth that the Lord hath sent forth his angel, and delivered me . . ." (Acts xii. 11). His case had been quite desperate, but the miraculous rescue came to make plain that God is indeed God. Shut up in a dungeon, closely guarded as well as chained, on the very eve of impending execution, he had come face to face with ultimate things. Then, in a wonderful way, chains had fallen off, prison doors had opened of their own accord, and he was free. There was only one explanation. He had proved the reality of God's living power. Peter had known for a long time that God is the great Reality, but that night he came to know it as never before. "Now I know . . ."

What was his own contribution to this great happening? We know, of course, that what took place was brought about by the faithful and earnest

prayer of the church. This, however, is not what we are now considering. We want to know what Peter did. The matter is not left to our conjectures, for we are told the simple truth, "Peter was sleeping" (Acts xii. 6). This may surprise us. Ought not Peter to have been wrestling in prayer? Clearly he did not think so. No doubt he had prayed before falling asleep, but it must have been a simple prayer of quiet confidence. "In returning and in rest" he was saved. God worked while he slept. It may even be true to say that God worked because he slept.

We may be inclined to blame Peter for this deep sleep which was so sound that the angel had to hit him in order to wake him from it. So to sleep at such a time may seem very unspiritual. Nevertheless if we put ourselves in his place, we may well ask ourselves if we could have done the same thing in those circumstances. Much lesser trials than his have a way of robbing us of sleep. We can talk, we can think, we can even pray; but the one thing which we do not seem able to do is to relax into sound and peaceful sleep. So it seems likely

that Peter's action, far from being unspiritual, was the best way of expressing triumphant faith. On the basis of such heart-rest and quiet confidence, the Lord finds His best opportunities of showing His power and Godhead.

So Peter's name must be added to the list of those who have received outstanding proofs of how right it is to put our affairs in the Lord's hands, to cast all our burdens on the Lord, to refuse anxiety and fret, and to exercise restful confidence in Him.

"Be still", the psalmist had commanded. Peter obeyed the command. He was still. "And know that I am God", was the promise given through the psalmist, a promise which Peter proved to be reliable and trustworthy. "Now I know . . .", he said, and in saying it, encouraged all of us who are in trouble as he was, with no human hope of help. The psalmist's God was Peter's God, and He is our God too. We shall gather fresh proofs that He is the great Reality if we can learn the essential lesson of quietness and confidence. "Be still, and know that I am God."

H. F.

## THE STEWARDSHIP OF THE MYSTERY

### CHAPTER FOUR

(continued)

WE continue in our contention that—while the sum of Divine revelation is sealed in the Scriptures and there is no adding to or taking from that revelation, there are vast depths of *meaning* therein yet to be revealed to the Lord's people by the "Spirit of revelation".

We have illustrated this, as what we mean, in the classic case of Dr. Hudson Taylor and his "Exchanged Life". We now proceed to instance one more of the many who could be mentioned.

Our second example is that of Dr. A. T. Pierson. To any who know him Dr. Pierson will not be lightly set aside as of small significance. He was indeed one of the spiritual and Bible giants of his time. A brilliant academic career laid a sound foundation for the exercise of his great gifts and endowments. A long and deep experience in ministry in some of America's most important cities led up to the great Bethany Church in Philadelphia. A close and devoted walk with God produced saintliness and meticulous integrity. Added to these was his phenomenal knowledge of the Scriptures; he was a master of the Bible.

The writer once heard Dr. Campbell Morgan—

himself no mean Bible teacher—speak in amazement of Dr. Pierson's grasp of the Bible. Dr. Campbell Morgan said that he was sitting on the platform close by Dr. Pierson at a Bible conference (I think it was at Mr. Moody's Centre at Northfield) while Dr. Pierson was giving the Bible reading. He said that for over an hour Dr. Pierson quoted passages of Scripture giving references in chapters and verses and exact reading while he rapidly turned the pages of his Bible as it rested on his hand. But, said Dr. Campbell Morgan, he was not reading the Bible at all, his Bible was upside-down. The whole thing was in his head. This, briefly, is the kind of man we have before us.

We reach on to an advanced point in his life and ministry and we come on this:—

"In the year — God gave me an experience of sudden illumination, which brought into my soul a flood of light, and made the Word of God a new book. Much that I had been taught, and had assumed as true, then seemed of doubtful Scriptural authority . . ." etc.

His biographer (his son) gives many pages to the exercise and adjustments which this 'illumination'

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

resulted in, but two things in particular have to be mentioned. One was the focal-point upon which all this exercise converged, and the other the great enlargement—immense enlargement—and deepening of his ministry when once he had got through the big crisis precipitated, and paid the great price of this new open Heaven.

Dr. Pierson, by upbringing, education, and training was a Presbyterian. He was firmly gripped by the Presbyterian tradition; he held strongly to its doctrines, form and teaching. It was not just something inherited or drifted into, but something to the verification of which he had bent all his considerable intellectual powers. It was a matter of honest and devout conviction, and for it he was a doughty champion. This was all particularly true of the one focal-point of his crisis—namely, infant baptism. Indeed, we can rightly say that it was upon this one question that his whole future life with God in utter committedness hung. Being, as it was, bound up with that new illumination which had come to him it involved him in no less an issue than an opened Heaven.

So serious did the matter become with him that the battle raged for several years. He said that serious misgivings entered his soul which he tried to silence by “quoting to myself the sanction of long custom, and by the logical argument which goes back to the Abrahamic covenant”. Now, were we here engaging in an argument for baptism of believers by immersion as over against baptism of infants, we should give pages from this record of Dr. Pierson’s crisis and transition. But that is not our present subject. What we are seeking to show is that he was one of the most outstanding men of God of the century—at least—who with very rich endowment and ability; with a knowledge of the Word of God second to none; with a real life of devotion and saintliness, believed deeply and firmly that a certain interpretation of Scripture was assuredly the right one, and used all his gifts and knowledge to prove it to be so, but—by reason of a God-given ‘illumination’—he came, first to have serious misgivings as to that position, and eventually to repudiate and abandon it, and act completely to the contrary. He attributed his change of position to a deepening of spiritual life following that illumination. He said, “I observe that, as my spiritual life deepens, these misgivings come more and more to the surface and will not be silenced; and whatever is linked to one’s own best spiritual state must for him be a way of duty.”

By following that illumination, Dr. Pierson met immense consequences. On the one hand, it cost

him everything of the former denominational position. It cost him terrible onslaughts in the press, secular and religious; it cost him many old friends; it cost him the confidence of many who owed him a great spiritual debt. On the other hand, his ministry, life, and work grew in range and depth to the extent that he has come down in evangelical history as one of God’s greatest servants of an era. How many owe a great debt to his ministry in conferences and in writing! The stewardship of the mystery rests upon revelation in this way which revolutionizes and releases even men of deep and wide experience and much knowledge. No one is too advanced and experienced to have such an entirely new and revolutionary illumination.

Dr. Pierson used a diagram at one of the Northfield Bible conferences when he was speaking on the tripartite nature of man—spirit, soul, and body. The diagram was in the form of a house with three floors: the ground floor—the body; the middle floor—the soul; the upper floor—the spirit. Each was described as to its own features. Over the upper or top floor, *which was open to Heaven*, he placed the words ‘Direct light from above’. This he had learned from experience.

Dr. Pierson, we are sure, would heartily agree with a suggestion that in that upper floor of his ‘house’—the spirit of man (that is, in the diagram)—an open Bible should be placed with the ‘direct light from above’ streaming on it.

Lest anyone should be inclined to think that we are placing too much importance upon one aspect of the truth, and that a somewhat remote and abstract aspect, we want to try to show that really we are dealing with a matter that is fundamental and vital to the whole Christian life.

There is a way of putting this which will not find any doubt or negative answer in any true Christian. We will put it in the form of a question.

WAS PENTECOST INTENDED TO BE FOR  
EVERY CHRISTIAN?

That is, was the blessing of the gift of the Holy Spirit meant for every true believer, every ‘born-anew’ child of God? No one who knows the New Testament will dispute this. The coming of the Holy Spirit was to be the very characteristic of the new dispensation which then began. Well then—

WHAT WAS THE MEANING OF  
PENTECOST?

To answer this question we have to go a long way back, but we pick up the clue in that Gospel



JANUARY — FEBRUARY, 1963.

which has more to say about the Holy Spirit than any other—the Gospel by John. In chapter i. 45—51, we have the unique incident of the introduction of Nathaniel into the band of associates of Jesus. The last part of what took place then is the words of Jesus to Nathaniel—“ Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man ”. Tempting as it is to open up more fully on the allusion to Jacob at Bethel—the House of God—etc., for our present purpose we must resist that temptation and take hold of the fragment

### THE HEAVEN OPENED.

By that fragment we are transported away back to the beginning of the Bible. We know that the word ‘ Paradise ’ is used in several places in Scripture as a name for Heaven, or at least, a part of Heaven. The question as to symbolism with spiritual principles embodied or literal interpretation need not make us digress to discuss ; the truth in either case is the same.

There was a time when man had immediate access to, and fellowship with, God. Everything was of God and to God’s pleasure. By sin through man’s unbelief and disobedience that was lost to him ; he was expelled, and the door was shut. Heaven was closed to man in sin. This is the state which obtained throughout the Old Testament times and continues through all time and eternity for man as still in his sin. But into that long history of the closed Heaven there comes a “ Second Man ”, a “ Last Adam ”, “ the Lord from Heaven ”. In Him was no sin, and as to Himself Heaven was open. John’s Gospel is just full of this open Heaven to Him.

But there was His purpose and vocation which was to recover an open Heaven for all men through *faith* in Him. Here, then, enters His *representative* work. The next time that we come on the opened Heaven is at His baptism. “ Jesus also having been baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended . . . upon him ” (Luke iii. 21, 22). Jesus at this point officially and publicly assumed His mission as Redeemer.

In *type* He made His death, burial, resurrection, and Pentecost the basis of His redeeming activity. The Baptism was a foreshadowing of His Cross and its afterward. Having no sin in Himself, “ He was made sin for us ”. Bearing the sin of the world, the dark waters of judgment went over His soul and He—in that moment—knew *the full meaning* of utter exclusion from God and Heaven ; He who had lived in Heaven and on earth in the very presence of and fellowship with God was now ‘ forsaken ’.

Having ‘ borne the sin of many ’ and ‘ carried it away ’, as Man for man, Heaven was opened again. What was symbolized in His Baptism was actual at Calvary and at Pentecost.

It was to this that He pointed in His words to Nathaniel: “ Ye shall see the heaven opened ”. Nathaniel was at Pentecost and he then knew what was meant. Christ personal and Christ corporate were the true Bethel under the opened Heaven.

So we come back to our point. The opened Heaven is linked with the gift of the Holy Spirit, and this is the birthright of *all* who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. But this is little more than a statement of fact. What this means is to be gathered from a careful reading of the after Pentecost writings of the New Testament. This we shall consider later.

T. A-S.

## FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

### RED CORD IN THE WINDOW

JANE and Jeremy were twins, and they always went to Sunday School together. One Sunday they came home full of excitement to tell their parents of the special speaker who had given a message to the whole school. The talk was about Jericho, and Jeremy tried to give his own imitation of how the people marched round and round, and how the priests kept blowing their rams’ horn trumpets, and how the walls fell flat when everybody shouted. That was the part which Jeremy liked, and he only wished he had been there to see it all for himself.

He talked so much that at last Father stopped him, and asked Jane if she too had enjoyed the message. Yes, said Jane, she had liked it very much, but what she liked best was the way in which Rahab had been saved. Then she asked a question: “ Why did she have to tie that red cord in her window? ”

Both Jeremy and Jane were always asking questions. Sometimes Father gave them an answer, but very often he passed the question back to them, suggesting that if they took care to think a little



## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

more, they might be able to find the answer for themselves. This is what he did now, saying, "Now you tell me why you think that Rahab tied the scarlet thread in her window."

Jeremy did not stop to think, but answered straight away that this was easy. It was so that Joshua could know which house she lived in. "No", replied Jane (who in any case had no high opinion of Jeremy's wisdom), "It couldn't have been that, for Joshua did not have to know where the house was. He just told the two spies to go and fetch her, and left it to them." "All right", Jeremy answered, "then it was to show the spies where she lived." Jane could not accept this either, and pointed out that as they had already been there, and stayed in her house, and as they had been lowered from that very window, they would not need anybody to tell them where it was.

This set both of them thinking again, and then Jane asked Father another question. "If Rahab's house was on the wall, and if all the walls fell flat, how was it that her house did not fall in on top of them?" She wondered if the red cord had anything to do with that.

This time Father was ready with an answer. He told the children that the same God who is powerful enough to make great walls fall down flat, is just as able to keep one piece of the wall still standing if He wanted to. It was clear that He must have done this, for Joshua told the two young men to go into the house, which they did, and there they found the whole family safe inside.

The twins were glad to have this explanation, and they were happy to know that God had been so careful to keep that one house safe when all the rest were falling down. It made them realise how very great and wonderful the Lord is. But it did not help Jane to know the answer to her first question. In fact it made it harder than ever, for if it was the only house on the wall left standing, then

what need was there to have a red line in the window?

This set even Father thinking. Joshua had not needed to see the scarlet thread. The two spies had not needed to see it. Who else could have needed to see it? Who else was there to see it, anyway? Then he knew the answer and this is what he said to Jeremy and Jane. In Egypt, he told them, when destruction was all around, the Israelites were kept safe because they had the lamb's blood sprinkled on their doorposts. God had said to them, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." It was God who saw the blood then (He saw it even at midnight), and it must have been God who saw the red line in the window. What had happened forty years before in Egypt was now happening again in Jericho.

That evening they read together Joshua chapter 2, which tells the story, and as they did so, Jane noticed something else. The two spies told Rahab to put the scarlet thread in the window when the army came into the land (verse 18), but she did not wait for that. She put it there as soon as they had left her house (verse 21). They all agreed that she must have been in a hurry to do it so quickly, but this also confirmed what Father had been saying earlier about it being there for God to see.

God sees everything. He sees when we trust Him. He sees when we obey at once what He has told us to do. In a sense this was answer enough to Jane's question. Rahab put the red rope in her window because God told her to do so. Father prayed for both her and Jeremy that they might learn how important it is to do what we are told, and to do it at once. And he prayed that both of them might put their red line in the window, by which he meant that they might make it plain that they were trusting in the mercy and power of the Saviour. Perhaps your father and mother are praying the same for you.

H. F.

## HORIZONED BY RESURRECTION

"Go tell his disciples, and Peter" (Mark xvi. 7).

"He appeared to Cephas" (I Corinthians xv. 5)

IN our consideration of what the Resurrection of Jesus meant in representative cases, we come next to

## SIMON PETER

There are two things that meet us immediately we think of Peter. One is, how very human he is ;

so like many ordinary people. The other is, his unquestioned primacy amongst the Twelve. It is helpful and encouraging to put these two things together, or to see them as together in this man. Sometimes either one or the other side has been violated with disastrous consequences. On the human side Peter has often been 'played down' with a cheap epithet—'Impulsive Peter'; just as Thomas is dismissed with—'Doubting Thomas'. Many people have taken cover for their weakness

JANUARY — FEBRUARY, 1963.

by making "impulsive Peter" their patron saint. This, as we shall see, will not do, for to do that is to dismiss the meaning of the Resurrection.

On the other hand, Peter has been so elevated as to be near infallible, the figurehead of the Church; even the 'Rock' on which the Church is built. Resurrection, when rightly understood as to its meaning and effect, will correct both of these errors and extremes, and bring Peter into his true place. To reach this understanding we have to do with Peter what we have done with Mary Magdalene and Thomas, and shall do with others; that is, see his category and analyse his constitution to see what was necessary and then how it happened.

### THE HUMAN CATEGORY OF PETER

It is unnecessary to say that the kind of people to which Simon Peter naturally belonged is a very likeable kind. Sometimes you may smile at their blustering and fussy ways; you may, at other times, blush for their foolhardy claims for themselves; and there are times when you feel that their impulsiveness creates uncertainty and reserve of confidence. But, withal, they win your affection because they are so transparent, free from inhibitions, and so well-meaning. They have a surface gift of pleasing, although they often get themselves into a terrible mess.

Anyone who is familiar with the works of Charles Dickens will see Mr. Micawber as a good example of this type and he has provided the English language with an adjective, so that an over-confident person is described as being very 'Micawber'.

These are the irrepressible people. They face life blithely. Optimistic to a fault, they have swift reactions to any rebuke or set-back. Almost always hopeful and happy, they effuse sunshine. The party is dull and sluggish until one of this kind arrives, and then it really begins. They just cannot be hidden or suppressed. These people are excellent advertisers and they can make an attractive show even of limited goods. Yes, they blunder, but they are most irresistible when they have covered themselves with confusion and are effusively apologetic. Their passions are quick and they may blaze up in apparent fury, but it does not last long; indeed, in a short time you would think from their manner that nothing had ever happened.

These are the people who do all the nicest things, especially after a lapse into the disagreeable. They never mean one-hundredth part of the things said by them in such lapses. They always make the best of things and circumstances. Their favourite hymn

—or sentiment—is "Count your blessings". Introspection never beclouds their spirits, and from the most pressing assaults upon their sincerity they will instantly forget themselves and say, "And this man, what . . .?" or "And what shall this (the other) man do?"

If you want help in a forlorn hope you will get it from these people, although it may be more in word or spirit than in its solidarity. But when we have said this and much more there *is* another aspect. It is true that the type under consideration can rise to great heights of enjoyment of life, they can drop into deep depression and even despair of themselves. "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man" shows how Simon Peter, the otherwise self-confident and self-assured, can suffer reactions. So, from great heights of assurance they can plunge to deep depths of depression. Their self-assurance makes them the people who take big risks without counting the cost. This is why the epithet 'impulsive' has been attached to Peter and his kind. He, and they, will take on liabilities in their good nature which will almost drown them later. Heedless risks are characteristic of these, and they will therefore often be found to be in debt, but altogether free from vice. To their ventures they will sacrifice the security and comfort of those they love most. How good-natured they are! They live to please, and yet they get themselves and their dependents into troubled waters.

What does all this say as to their real need?

For the purpose of our present consideration of Resurrection meaning, it says very much, and leads on to the tremendous thing that Resurrection effected in Simon Peter.

It requires very little perception to recognize that, with all the delightful and attractive features of this category the fatal flaw is in their lack of

### THE DIMENSION OF DEPTH.

They are—let us be frank—superficial both in their exhilarations and in their depressions; their heights and their depths (?). Their confidence has a shallow foundation. Their boasting will not bear the strain. Their optimism will have to be fed by social occasions. Their cheerfulness will not survive an atmosphere of depression or lack of appreciation. Their fundamental need is of spiritual rigidity and stamina. Their enthusiasms so often being short-lived need the strengthening "supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ". Their rapidity of change demands a deepening of their foundations. John Bunyan has given their classic example in

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

Mr. Pliable who, in the hour of real testing, fell into the slough of despond and climbed out of the mire on *that side which was nearest to his own house*.

This then is the kind which has many more beginnings than completions. They often commit themselves to a course which they cannot sustain, and from which, in more mature consideration they would fain escape.

Simon Peter was an excellent example of this type, and the end of his career before the Resurrection shows to what lengths he will go to evade the consequences of his own impulsive commitments or protestations.

We have said far less than could be said on both sides of this makeup, its good and its weakness, but we have said enough to make it clear that, to bear the strain and the responsibility, the honour and the glory that Peter came to inherit, something very real had to be done in him.

While the Cross was the occasion and the means of exposing Simon, especially to himself, and of bringing him to the depths of self-despair, it was the Resurrection that saved him and supplied his lack.

## SIMON PETER'S 'CONVERSION'

From the words of the Lord to Simon in which He told him of what was going to happen we gather two things:—

1. That there was a much deeper meaning in Simon's defection and breakdown than just the natural outworking of his temperament. It lies in that mysterious realm mentioned not infrequently in the Bible and notably at the beginning of the Book of Job. Satan is represented as having a peculiar interest in the downfall of servants of God. Moreover, he is represented as having some kind of access to God with that interest. Further, he is represented as having a measure of success in his quest, and obtaining a limited permission to affect such servants. So we read of Jesus saying to Simon, "Simon, Simon, Satan hath obtained thee by asking that he may sift thee as wheat." That is the first phase. In some mysterious way the terrible collapse of Simon in the denial of Christ was a working of Satan, and it was to sift Simon as wheat. It was similar to the experience of wheat when the

flail gets to work and it is relentlessly beaten out. What a shaking! What a ruthless ordeal! But what is the effect? It is first to expose, to make manifest and evident what is false and worthless, and what is true and real. Then it is to put each into its category, the one to go, the other to stay. But this ordeal is like the ordeal of death, devastating and desolating.

2. Jesus had, however, in the same mystery, known this quest of Satan and its partial or controlled consent; but, said He, "I have made intercession for thee that thy faith fail not". In other words, "I have made a counter quest and asking, and mine has prevailed. Simon, you will turn again (be 'converted') and when thou art turned again, strengthen thy brethren". For the strengthening of brethren it required something much more than was in the old and natural Simon Peter.

The type which we have considered, with all its social and human values, needs something added to make the Peter of Pentecost; of the *subsequent* court of the murderous rulers; of the house of Cornelius; of the tranquil sleeper in prison on the night before execution; of the Council of Apostles and Elders in Jerusalem; and of the Letters which go by his name. Something mighty had happened in Simon Peter. What was it?

In His resurrection Jesus had not only thrown out that other one of the quest against Simon; this He had done: He, through His Cross, had released the very life that was in Himself; that life with all its potentialities of endurance and victory, and, at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit had taken that life to impart to such as the restored Simon Peter, so that he came to know what Paul was so fond of speaking about—"the *power of his resurrection*".

Thus, Resurrection became the horizon of new potentialities for men who so ignominiously failed on the ground of their own makeup. The depth, the stamina, the ability to go through the once-dreaded death; all of which things were so conspicuously absent from the pre-resurrection man, were added by union with Christ in resurrection, in the power of the Holy Spirit. This union and its mighty virtues are—so the New Testament teaches—the inheritance of every born-anew child of God, to be claimed and appropriated by faith.

T. A-S.

"This is His will: He takes and He refuses,  
Finds Him ambassadors whom men deny,  
Wise ones nor mighty for His saints He chooses,  
No, such as John, or Gideon, or I." (F. W. H. Meyers)



JANUARY — FEBRUARY, 1963.

## THE CROSS GIVES THE TRUE ESTIMATE OF THE LOVE OF GOD

*"The cross of Jesus" (John xix. 25).*

**N**O one can tell who invented the cross. The origin of it is unknown. We know the Romans used the cross for the punishment of criminal slaves, or any one they wished to disgrace, as well as kill.

The cross was not the only instrument of death used by the Romans, but it was the one used when they wished to add to death deep disgrace. Just how long the cross has been used as an instrument of death no one knows.

The cross was an emblem of ignominy and shame until Jesus Christ went forth bearing a cross. But now a marvellous change has taken place, for it is now an emblem of love and sacrifice.

Friends, I desire to let you look at the cross of Jesus, that cross which stands in spite of human indifference and defiant scepticism, the most enduring fact and the most potent factor in all this world.

The Psalmist on one occasion said, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord". And so I would say to all that are here: "Come, let us go to Mount Calvary; let us see the place of our reconciliation; let us see the price paid for our redemption. Come, let us go and see the cross where Jesus purchased our redemption and salvation."

It is a Friday morning in April; the sky is clear, the day is bright and beautiful. We are in the city of Jerusalem: we shall rise early and be at the Damascus Gate so as to be the first ones at the opening.

Look closely and you will see fifty soldiers on one side of the road and fifty soldiers opposite them on the other, while walking between them are three men, each bearing a cross, upon which he is to be crucified. Suspended on the breast of each man is a large, white board, upon which is written the crime for which he is to be crucified.

Upon one board is written a name—crime, highway robber and murderer; on another, the same

crime; but upon the board of the man who is attracting the most attention are written the words: "Jesus of Nazareth, crime, blasphemy. He said he was the son of God."

And now, before we leave the cross, let us gather some of the lessons it teaches.

1. The cross of Jesus gives us God's estimate of sin. Scripture plainly asserts the connection between the cross of Jesus and sin. "Who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree."

Are any of you thinking lightly of sin? Are you looking upon it as a passing weakness? If so, will you not behold the cross of Jesus and remember that that suffering is God's estimate of the punishment due sin—any sin unforgiven?

2. The cross of Jesus gives us an estimate of God's love for man. Nowhere in the universe has such a revelation of God's love to man been revealed to man.

3. The cross of Jesus reveals to us the value God places on man, man in the complex. Yes, the cross of Jesus is God's estimate of man's worth to Him. Fellow man, do you realise that there is something about you or in you so valuable that the Son of God was willing to lay down His life to save you?

4. The cross of Jesus is the pledge of man's salvation. The chasm made by sin has been bridged over by the cross of Jesus.

God is speaking to you this very moment through the cross of Jesus. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." Are you not among the number who are being drawn to the uplifted Saviour? Is it possible that you can leave the cross of Jesus without being touched, without being moved to love and fidelity to the crucified one?

It remains for you to decide whether the cross means anything to you or not. Will you not at this moment yield your heart to Him who died on the cross in order that you might be justified, sanctified, glorified?

SELECTED



## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

## LEADERSHIP

## CHAPTER THREE

**I**N our quest for instruction in leadership which the Scriptures contain, there is a wealth of teaching given in our second great Old Testament instance, namely,

## JOSHUA.

*Oshea—Joshua—Jehoshua—Jesus* means 'The Lord—the Saviour'.

Joshua, like the One whom he typifies, is the link joining the great salvation *from* with the great salvation *unto*. Moses—in the main—had to do with the salvation *from*; Joshua entered into that, shared it, and then took it to the great *unto* of its purpose.

The *unto* broke down in the case of Moses, although he laid its foundation. It broke down with the first generation who came out. They failed to go through. The New Testament repeatedly refers to this failure in the most solemn warnings to Christians of this dispensation. In so doing it reflects the very great importance of the leadership-work of Joshua, and thereby lifts Joshua and his special aspect of leadership on to very high and vital ground. Nothing less than the whole import of salvation, and therefore ninety-per-cent of the New Testament is represented by the leadership of Joshua. True, in his own case, it failed of full realisation and Joshua did not lead them into the "rest" (Heb. iv. 8). But he did—in *eternal principles*—lead to the One who has made his work complete, even Jesus.

In order, therefore, to understand the true meaning and value of Joshua's vocation we have to begin from the full issue and then work over the particular steps to see the fundamentals of that vocation.

There is no doubt that Joshua was the Old Testament counterpart of Paul; each in his different and respective sphere. The one, the earthly, temporal, and limited; the other in the heavenly, spiritual and universal.

In both cases the dominating issue was

## THE FULNESS OF CHRIST

as being God's supreme and all-inclusive purpose. This was—and is—the object of the salvation 'out from'. Fail of this and salvation has lost its most

essential meaning and object. Fail of this and we inherit all the reproaches resultant from the tragedy of Kadesh Barnea. Fail of this and we are in the first letter to the Corinthians where—with this very example presented—a life-work can go up in smoke in 'the day', and we be saved 'yet only as by fire'. Fail of this and the most grievous things in the New Testament (see the Letter to the Hebrews chapters vi and x, etc.) will apply to us. From both the Old Testament history and the New Testament admonitions it is evident that it is possible to be saved in an elementary sense but lose the 'inheritance'; and it is the inheritance which justifies all.

Thus, Joshua represents the leadership which, energized by the Holy Spirit, has in view and all-governing, that fulness into which Christ has entered and which He is, and has, for His people. Nothing less or other than that.

This is a tremendous thing, and it constitutes a very great vocation. It gives leadership its highest and fullest meaning. If it should be argued to the contrary on the ground that Joshua is hardly mentioned in the New Testament, and his name is not listed with the heroes of faith in Hebrews xi, the fact is that, rather than that weakening the contention, it only strengthens it, and that overwhelmingly. The Joshua of the Old Testament is swallowed up in his transcendently great Namesake of the New—Jesus. Further, Joshua was absolutely overshadowed and mastered by "the captain of the Lord of Hosts", and thus the Holy Spirit eclipses the human vessel.

What Joshua really represents, then, is Christ under the anointing Spirit committed to the full purpose of God—the Heavenly Inheritance, God's fulness in His Son.

Who will say that to have even a small place in this work is not pre-eminently important? Here, then, leadership takes on its superlative meaning.

Having pointed this out in so few words, we are able to go right back and trace the steps in Joshua's life and schooling, the features and factors, which led to his high vocation, and which are basic to such leadership. Let it be understood that for many years Joshua himself was in the school of leadership. He was being tested, proved, drawn out to be approved. This aspect of his history was in the wilderness, and forty being the number of

JANUARY — FEBRUARY, 1963.

probation, Joshua's leadership had its difficult and testing probation. No one leaps suddenly into *this* vocation. A great deal of history lies behind *this* ministry.

It will surprise no one that, with such a purpose in view, leadership is fundamentally linked with warfare.

## JOSHUA — THE MAN OF WAR

We first meet Joshua in connection with the withstanding of God's people by Amalek (Exod. xvii). So early in the people's history, as they start with freshness toward the ultimate goal, evil forces arise to bar the way. Amalek took the initiative—"then fought Amalek". We need not embark upon all the details, such as what Amalek typifies in spiritual conflict. The opposing forces take various forms, choosing their own significant ground and time. For our purpose the fact of opposition is the occasion for bringing to light what was there, but hidden, as God's answer.

It is in a time of conflict, when the enemy takes the initiative that there is revealed what fighting spirit there is hidden amongst the Lord's people. Joshua was the embodiment of this spirit. He knew that this move of the enemy signified a disputing of the inheritance; that it was not just an incidental and unrelated thing. Defeat here had a long-range connection. *Everything* was involved. There would be many battles ahead and the approach of the full end would be marked by an intensification of conflict from which there would be very brief, if any, respite; but this very early assault involved the whole.

It would be a great thing if the Lord's people saw everything in the light of the full end and weighed what seems but incidental against the whole involvement of a defeat at any given point. How much hangs upon this *spirit* of leadership coming to light at a critical moment! Leadership, in Joshua's case, was hidden, so far as the record shows, until the hour of real need, then it is found to have been there, but latent. But there is little doubt that Joshua had

## A SECRET HISTORY WITH GOD.

So we come on a vital factor in leadership. It is a secret history with God which is motivated by a deep and intense jealousy for God's full thought. Later it came out in the revealing occasion when he and Caleb stood alone against all Israel.

The second occasion on which we meet Joshua

is equally revealing as to his spirit. It is when Moses was in the mount with God. The forty days had proved too much for the patience of this vacillating and self-willed people. They broke loose, and Aaron's part in it was deeply discreditable. (The story is in Exodus xxxii.)

As Moses descended the mount, picking up Joshua on the way down, they heard the noise in the camp. It must have been loud and confused; indeed, very wild. Consistent with his very spirit, Joshua interpreted it as 'the noise of battle'. The war-horse thought he scented conflict. He was right, although the battle element was deeper than the appearance. They were making merry, but their very merriment was a battle against God.

Jealousy for God's honour will sense and see the really inimical and hostile elements in things like this. Anything that threatens to take the Lord's unique and utter place will make one like Joshua instinctively scent battle and rise to it in spirit. Joshua represents utterness for God and of God and this always means battle. If the *whole* purpose of God concerning His Son and His Church really captures the spirit, compromise is intolerable and unthinkable. In this, Joshua does foreshadow his great New Testament counterpart—Paul, and they very definitely meet in the latter's Letter to the Galatians.

The spirit of battle which characterized Joshua on the way down the mountain found its very definite materializing in the immediate act of Moses. His challenge of—"Who is on the Lord's side" found Joshua a wholly committed man. The test was a very grim and exacting one, but it is evident that he was wholly one with "the sons of Levi" in their uncompromising course.

The tent was pitched outside the camp and to it and Moses, Joshua, with the sons of Levi resorted at the call of Moses. This brings us to the next significant mention of Joshua: ". . . Joshua . . . departed not out of the tent". Joshua had chosen the place of complete separation and difference at great cost, and there he stayed.

The Letter to the Hebrews takes this incident up and applies it, on the one side to the compromising Judaizers, which it calls "the camp"; and on the other side to the non-compromising, committed devotees to Jesus Christ. It says that to the latter "outside the camp" is the place of "bearing his reproach".

Here, then, we have come on two more factors in true spiritual leadership. One is that the true leader is one who will never, however much it costs, be drawn into compromise. A leader must

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

never be weak. He must never allow policy to override principle. He must never allow popular opinion to weaken his committedness. He must never allow sentiment to dilute his strength. He must never let sociability make him sacrifice supreme interests and spiritual or moral integrity under the cover and pretext of a false usage of Paul's words about becoming "all things to all men". 'Hebrews' says that "outside the camp" where Joshua elected to be is the unpopular place, and it is always very testing to be unpopular. But leadership often demands this price.

The other thing which arises at this point in the case of Joshua is reliability. Moses—not in compromise—returned to the camp. Joshua abode in the tent. This is stated in the narrative evidently with a serious meaning. What the full meaning is may be left for us to consider, but this one thing is clear, you would always know where to find Joshua. If it were asked, 'Where is Joshua?' everybody would have the answer: 'O, he is—where he always is—in the tent.' If Moses needed him he knew where to find him.

Leadership absolutely demands this characteristic of dependableness. What a strength it is to know that a person can be guaranteed to be in a definite spiritual position: right on the spot spiritually; not temperamental, vacillating, variable, or unpredictable. The multitude, especially "the mixed multitude" is like that, not consistently true for two days together. You never know how you are going to find them at any given time. To lead them into anything more of God demands this feature of 'abiding'. Yes, there may be discouragement, disappointment, provocation, and heartbreak, but true spiritual leadership rests upon an all-or-nothing basis, and deep down there is an abandon to purpose which is stronger than all that is against.

The leader may adjust on points and be open to progressive light, but as to *the* ultimate Divine vision, he will die rather than betray or recant. He is no time-server or opportunist. He cannot be bought off. He is going on or he is going out. He has seen, and he can never unsee. He says, "Here I am, I can do no other. May God help me", or, "this *one thing* I do."

Such a faithfulness and undeviating committal is something in the very nature of the call and the vocation.

But with all his strength of purpose, Joshua, like his New Testament counterparts, was always in school learning fresh lessons on leadership.

Our next touch with him is very indicative of

this. It is in Numbers xi, The Spirit of God is exercising His essential sovereign liberty. Into this sovereign activity certain 'laymen' are caught up; that is, men who are not recognized official prophets; they are not in the recognized place for functioning in such a way. Eldad and Medad come under the spontaneous movement of the Spirit and prophesy in the camp. Joshua is alarmed and scandalized. He rushes to Moses in his jealousy for that great man and cries, "My lord Moses, forbid them". To his amazement and disconcertion, Moses shows no sympathy with his jealousy and conventionality. Rather does Moses rebuke it—"Would to God that all the Lord's people were prophets"; 'Do not be jealous for me.' In other words, 'Do not limit the Lord. Do not circumscribe the Holy Spirit.' The Holy Spirit will not be bound by jealous conventionality, nor by human fears as to what He may do next—"The wind bloweth where it listeth".

The situation is quite clear. Peter had to learn this lesson, and failure to do so fully only resulted in fettering the Church and some of its apostles. The absolute sovereignty of the Holy Spirit was something which meant an immense amount in the after life of Joshua and his leadership. If it is true that 'the love of God is broader than the measure of man's mind', that is only another way of saying that the Holy Spirit will demand the right and liberty to overleap our prejudices, our stringencies of interpretation; indeed, anything and everything that makes Christ smaller than He really is.

The very leadership itself can be jeopardized and falsified if this lesson is not well and truly learned.

But our special point here is not the range of the Spirit's work, for the occasion to which we are referring was amongst the Lord's people. What we are especially pointing to as an essential law of leadership is the absolute sovereign rights and liberty of the Holy Spirit to choose His own ways and means, places and times. The government of the Holy Spirit without deference to any one or any thing other than His own nature and authority has to be recognized, acknowledged, and accepted in order to implement the Divine purpose. This will arise again when the new generation is with Joshua over the Jordan.

Seeing that there is almost as much again to be said regarding leadership as revealed in Joshua, we had better make a break here and put the remainder into a continuation chapter. But let us sum up the points thus far. Leadership

1. Always has to do with a specific purpose.



JANUARY — FEBRUARY, 1963.

2. Demands the soldier-spirit.
3. Will not and must not tolerate compromise.
4. Must be characterized by reliability and faithfulness.

5. Requires an absolute acceptance of the complete sovereignty of the Holy Spirit, and therefore a capacity for learning and making adjustments.

T. A-S.

*(to be continued)*

## THE PASSION OF THE CHURCH

*"Joint heirs with Christ; IF SO BE that we suffer with him" (Romans viii. 17).*

THE 'if' of this verse is significant, and of vital importance. "IF we suffer, we shall also reign with him" the Apostle writes to Timothy (II Tim. ii. 12). In Rom. v. 17 we read that we may "reign in life" now by receiving the "abundance of grace" and the gift of righteousness", but to reign with Christ in glory is plainly said to require a co-suffering with Him in such a measure that, apart from His atoning work, such suffering may be described, as one has said, as an 'extension of His Passion' through the members of His Body. Was it not this that Paul referred to when he wrote that he was filling up "what is yet lacking of *the sufferings of Christ*" in his flesh "on behalf of his body which is the church" (Col. i. 24, c.H.), and in II Cor. i. 5, "the *sufferings of Christ* have come upon me above measure"?

Is not this the key to the appalling anguish and suffering which has come upon multitudes of the saints of God in Russia and other lands? And is it not the key to the lives of many believers in our own land at this time, for it does not need actual martyrdom of the body, such as many have known in Russia, to become true martyrs for Christ in the present hour. "Since I was converted", said a believer recently, "my own daughter passes me by in the street" and but few, very few, who are seeking to be true to Christ, but are suffering reproach, and many unspeakable trials in their family life.

We have so blithely talked of the 'victory', and the 'reigning life', but it is dawning upon many that the 'victory' may be only recognizable from the God-ward standpoint, oft-times appearing on the man-ward side as rank defeat according to Rev. xiii. 7. That is, the 'Throne life' which is breaking upon the vision of the advancing saints as their privilege in union with Christ in His exaltation, is in its earthward aspect *the reigning from a tree*. It is in *spirit* only that we now share the Throne-life of our Lord, and the 'reigning' is in the *invisible realm*, over His and our spiritual foes. But on earth

it will increasingly be that all those who thus reign in spirit will be "reckoned as sheep for the slaughter" (Rom. viii. 36, *Darby*), to 'more than conquer' in all through their Reigning Lord.

Thus will come about in these closing days of the dispensation, what may be described as the 'Passion of the Church'. It was through her Lord's Passion that He ascended to the Throne (Heb. ii. 9), and it is through the extension of that 'Passion' that every member of the Body of Christ, which is to reign with Him, will be prepared to share His Throne.

That this is the teaching of the Scriptures is strikingly shown by the fact that 39 times in the N.T. the word translated 'sufferings' is the Greek word *pascho*, rendered 'passion' in Acts i. 8. Let us note a few passages where the word *pascho*, or 'passion', is used, first in:—

### I. THE 'PASSION' OF THE LORD HIMSELF.

"With desire I have desired to eat this pass-over with you before I *suffer [pascho]*" (Luke xxii 15).

"Ought not Christ to *suffer [pascho]*" Luke xxiv., 26, 46.

See also Matt. xvi. 21 ; xvii, 12 ; Mark viii. 31 ; ix. 12 ; Luke ix. 22 ; xvii. 25 ; Heb. ii. 18 ; v. 8 ; xii. 26 ; xiii. 12 ; I Pet. ii. 19, 20, 21, 23 ; iii. 18 ; iv. 1 ; v. 10.

### II. THE PASSION OF THE MEMBERS OF CHRIST

*Paul*: "I will show him how great things he must *suffer [pascho]*" (Acts ix. 16).

*The Thessalonian believers*: "For which ye also *suffer [pascho]*" (II Thess. i. 5 (See I Thess. ii. 14).

*The Corinthians*: "We also *suffer [pascho]*" (II Cor. i. 6).

*The Phillipians*: "To you it is given . . . to *suffer [pascho]*" (Phil. i. 29).

*The Body of Christ*: "Whether one member



## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

*suffer* [*pascho*], all the members *suffer* [*sunpascho*, co-passion] . . ." (I Cor. xii. 26).

How vividly this co-suffering with Christ, which every member of His Body must share to co-reign with Him, thus comes out when we see that the word used to describe the Lord's 'Passion' is the one used for the sufferings of the Church. This truly is an extension of His Passion which must be brought about throughout His entire Body, 'corporate'—not only as an instrument of His power—but 'corporate' in "*filling up the afflictions of Christ*" for His Body, so that corporately, as well as individually, through each member life may pass out to others.

## III. THE 'PASSION' OF CHRIST IN THE BELIEVER'S LIFE

"Endure grief, *suffering* [*pascho*] wrongfully" (I Pet. ii. 19).

"Do well and *suffer* [*pascho*] for it . . . take it patiently" (I Pet. ii. 20).

"When he *suffered* [*pascho*] he threatened not . . ." (I Pet. ii. 23).

"*Suffer* [*pascho*] for righteousness sake" (I Pet. iii. 14).

Suffering wrongfully, suffering patiently, suffering silently. Suffering for righteousness sake. Was not this what Christ did on Calvary? Peter does not hesitate to use the word 'passion' as applicable to the Lord's own children who 'suffer' as He did, wrongfully; 'doing well' and suffering for it. Even thus are the members of the Body brought into corporate life with their Risen Head. The 'extension of the Passion' of Christ is absolutely necessary for the whole Body of Christ, if it is to actually share the Throne. "Joint-heirs . . . IF SO BE we suffer with him."

J. P-L.

## A RIGHT THING DONE IN A WRONG WAY

(I Chronicles xiii - xv)

**T**HE inclusion of this episode in the Chronicles of Israel has evidently a very definite purpose; it conveys a message which the "Israel of God"—the Church—has been, and still is, all too slow to take account of.

Precisely, it is this. A right thing done in a wrong way can be as disastrous as either not doing it at all or even doing a wrong thing. It says beyond question that God is as jealous and particular about *how* a thing is done as He is about having it done at all. Let us look carefully at this tragedy.

## THE CREDIT SIDE

On the credit and good side we have

1. The right object. There was no question whatever that the matter in hand was something right and that God wanted to be done. Eventually, when it was done in the right way, He greatly blessed it. That the homeless Ark of the Testimony should be brought a real stage nearer to its final resting-place was all in accord with the mind of God. It was really destined to have its full and final place as the focal-point of the life of the redeemed nation in Jerusalem, and so reach the end of that disorder resultant, so largely, from the man-made régime of Saul (verse 3).

2. It was contemplated, discussed, and decided

upon with reference and deference to the will of God (verse 2). That will was desired and honoured.

3. Although the initiative and inspiration came from one man, it was a corporate decision, taken in conference and fellowship. There was no independent act of an individual (verses 2, 5).

4. There was no lack of zeal, enthusiasm, and energy. It says that they did it "with all their might" (verse 8).

5. The motive, good intention, sincerity, and devotion were unquestionable.

This makes a fairly good total on the credit side: right object; the will of God desired; unity and fellowship in decision; whole-hearted zeal in committal; rightness of motive and intention. What more could be required? Are these not the things which characterize most enterprises for God? There is certainly nothing wrong with *them* in themselves, and no condemnation attaches to any one of those points. What more could be called for?

And in the case under consideration, all seemed to be going well and prospering *for a time*. They were 'making merry before the Lord with all their might, with songs, and lyres, and harps, and tambourines, and cymbals, and trumpets' (verse 8). The *seeming* success up to a certain point led them to assume that the Lord was with them and that His acceptance was assured. But—Oh, woeful But!—something happened. In itself it was a

JANUARY — FEBRUARY, 1963.

simple thing and not an extraordinary happening. It was only that "the oxen stumbled". Upon that stumble in the threshing-floor of Chidon the entire scene changed. An apparently simple incident uncovered a whole lot of wrong in principle. It was well-intentioned on the part of Uzza, prompted by real concern for the Ark and its safety; a real interest in the success of the whole undertaking and enterprise. All that he did was to "put forth his hand to hold the Ark" (verse 9). It was all so natural, so spontaneous, so well-meant, so free from vice and evil desire. But "the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzza, and he smote him . . . and he died there . . . before God" (verse 10).

Well, we may not like it, and we may feel bad about it. That is how David felt. He was angry (verse 11). He was afraid of God (verse 12), and he said, "How can I bring up the Ark of God to me?" Looked at naturally there appears to be very good reason for being offended with the Lord; for saying, 'evidently the Lord does not want us, or our service; He does not care for all our well-meaning efforts to do what we were convinced was His will and would please Him. We had better give it up!' So David felt and acted accordingly, and the whole project came to a standstill.

So it remained long enough to permit the resentment to die down and exercise of heart to take place. There was deep enquiry before the Lord as to His meaning in all this. David was a big enough man in character to rise above mere pique, resentment, and offendedness. God has to be justified and His ways vindicated. So, in heart-enquiry, the debit side comes to light.

### THE DEBIT SIDE

What was a cart, even though it be a nice new and handsome one, doing in this business? What was it and where did the idea come from? Familiar and well-worn as it all is, let us frankly face it. This cart idea was born among the Philistines, persistent and incorrigible enemies of Israel (See I Samuel vi. 7, etc.). David had spent a not very commendable period of his life among the Philistines. It was a time governed by that abomination to God—compromise. Compromise—like appeasement—only puts off the evil day for a while, but it is an uneasy interim and the end is shame and reproach. It is at heart but a temporary relief.

So it was with David. During his time with the Philistines he had become familiar with the cart-device, and no doubt the idea had returned with him. When the Ark had been captured by the

Philistines in the days of Saul, they had placed it on a new cart. They had suffered the severe judgments of God for having touched it and, although superstitiously, had sent it back in awe.

In the interval of tragedy David—*through enquiring into the Word of God*—came to see that worldly methods, organizations, inventions, and the productions of the "uncircumcized" (uncrucified) in heart and mind, are not the ways and means of the Spirit of holiness. Nothing imported by the natural man, or that emanates from him, will pass with the Lord when it is the essential and full testimony of Jesus which is in view. The cart may represent many things and may be linked up with many well-intentioned objects, but it is an invention of man.

In the oxen we may see symbolized the strength and energy of nature. Strength of mind, will, emotion, were all there in that enterprise. The Lord's word is "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit" (Zech. iv. 6).

So much then for the Philistine cart. But what of Uzza? What was he, and what was he doing there? There is something here which calls for a very close and careful attention. Uzza was the son of Abinadab. It was in the house of Abinadab that the Ark was lodged when the Philistines sent it back on their new cart. Uzza had become very familiar with the Ark, perhaps too familiar, and most likely a kind of proprietorship had come into him. The sacred testimony had been in his house for a very long time. His father was a Levite; he was the son of a Levite. He should have known, indeed, he must have known the history, the nature, and the vocation of the Levites. All the provisions and the instructions for carrying the Ark were a part of his very inheritance. The Levites were especially near to God because of that radical repudiation of all that related to foreign gods in the day of the golden calf. The very principle of foreign worship was expunged from their constitution as the tribe of Levi. The Ark embodied what was utterly separate and holy. On long poles alone could they carry it, not touching it with their own hands,

Uzza was supposed to know all this. He was, however, held responsible for knowing it. The eyes of glory and of flame saw in Uzza a fatal familiarity with holy things. Moreover, those eyes saw beyond the Ark to what it represented. The Ark was no less a type than of the Son of God Himself: Divine in the gold; incarnate in the wood; containing the mind of God in perfection; the rod of living priesthood in resurrection; the heavenly

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

manna of life for the people of God. To God the Father, the Son is infinitely holy and sacred; "separate from sinners", and to touch Him with familiar hands is to meet the jealousy of God.

Uzza had insinuated himself into a false position. Was there some secret pride which led to presumption? God had not put Uzza where he was at that time. Being in a false position, he could—as it seemed—of necessity put out his own hand when things became difficult.

There *was* a movement of God stirring. God had repudiated and brought to an end that false régime under Saul. That also had been man's choice. It was human glory that governed; it was natural strength. God had exposed it. There is one thing that God will not tolerate in what is truly of Himself; it is that any "flesh" shall glory in His presence. God was moving toward that which, in the history of Israel, would—as fully as type could do so—represent His mind about government, foreshadowing the Kingdom of His Son. If that was to be through 'a man after His own heart', then everything of a contrary nature thereto had to be judged.

It is to be noted that this dramatic incident had a very wide audience: "all Israel, from Shihor of Egypt to the entrance of Hamath". So that all the people of God were to know the solemn lesson being taught. The kingdom is coming in, and it is to be established according to Heaven. It cannot stand if its foundation is other than heavenly. It is—in principle—the Kingdom of *God*, not of *man*, even with the best intentions. The great lesson, then, and the lesson which David learned, is that for spiritual things only spiritual people have a place. Let us put that into large print, it is so important.

FOR SPIRITUAL THINGS — ONLY  
SPIRITUAL PEOPLE

The basis upon which the tribe of Levi was set apart for the holy ministry to the Tabernacle defines the nature of spiritual men, and it should be carefully studied again. They were men who in their very constituting knew the difference between the natural and the spiritual. They had been tested very drastically and had shown themselves true at great cost. Their office or *public* service was not their testing. They were not put into spiritual responsibility in order to give them an opportunity to show their fitness for it. They were not selected by men, much less were they there of their own volition or ambition. They were there because God approved of them *as men*. They were *men of God*,

not firstly officials or parts of a machine. They were men with a history with God which came to light at a time of spiritual emergency. All the Lord's people knew this. They were an Israel within Israel and showed what every Israelite ought to be.

God had been watching the development which had been initiated by David and the new cart, and He saw the contradiction and falsehood at its very heart. It is not just a matter of correct technique or right form; nor is it just correspondence with an orthodox system of teaching or practice. It is essentially and indispensably the spirituality of those in active association with the Testimony. We can be passionately evangelical or 'fundamentalist'; we can be fastidiously jealous for correct doctrine and order, and yet—with all this—still not be spiritual men. There can be as wide a gap between a rabid fundamentalist and a spiritual man as there is between a conservative and a liberal theologian. Failure to understand this difference results in a very great deal of confusion.

Uzza would have passed for a very zealous evangelical, but his lack of spirituality led to the tragedy recorded. It amounted to interfering with or overlooking God's *spiritual* order.

So we end where we began. This whole episode, so full of powerful instruction shows that God is just as particular as to *how* a thing is done in relation to Himself as He is that it should be done at all. Spiritual principles are very serious things with Him; even to the point of life or death. Whether it be in Old Testament foreshadowing or in New Testament reality, it is all a matter of God's jealousy for His Son. No *man* may put his hand on God's Son to control or take charge. The custodianship of the "Testimony of Jesus" is not in man's hands.

Good motive and intention may be quite right, but with that there must be spiritual understanding. Zeal, yes, indeed; but not zeal that is not according to knowledge. Let there be a desire to do God's will, but let the doing and the way of doing be governed by the Spirit of God, and not just by human judgment. God's *way* is as important as God's end.

If, through a mistake, tragedy, confusion, and even heartbreak ensues, natural questions would be—'What is to be done?' 'How can the fault—if not the damage—be corrected?' 'Now that the damage is done and cannot be undone, should we not just leave it and trust to the sovereignty of God to over-rule it for good?'

If we are to take the particular incident before us



JANUARY — FEBRUARY, 1963.

as a guide and answer, there is quite clear guidance. If a situation exists concerning which we have in all honesty to say that the *way* was wrong, we must do what David did. We must go back to the point where we were wrong, that is, to the Word of God and its provision, and in humble, contrite confession, start again from *that* point. God will have no glossing over of the violation of basic principles with talk about 'sovereignty'. That

would be to use God against His own word. If it is possible to do so we must correct the wrong. Let it be understood that we are not here referring to errors, mistakes, or even sins in human life; we are referring to the work of God and the Lord's Testimony in building according to Christ.

It is the law that God's end must be reached in God's way.

T. A-S.

---

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We acknowledge with gratitude the following gifts received during October and November, 1962.

Amstelveen, Holland £4; Ashcott £8; Babba-combe 10s.; Bangalore, India £1; Bearsden £1; Belfast 15s., £1 11s., £2; Bembridge 11s. 5d.; Berlin, Germany £1; Bideford 15s.; Bolton 17s. 2d.; Bournemouth 10s.; Bradford £1; Brighton £1, £3; Brynmawr 13s. 9d.; Buckingham 11s. 6d.; Burnley 5s.; Bury St. Edmunds £1; Cardiff £2; Cheltenham 10s.; Cliftonville £1 11s.; Colwyn Bay 10s.; Corfe Mullen 7s.; Craigavid £1; Crawley 4s. 10d.; Deal 12s. 6d., £1 2s. 6d.; Ditchling £1 18s. 6d.; Dublin 7s. 6d., 17s. 6d.; Dunston-on-Tyne £1; Edinburgh £1; Erith £1; Fes, Morocco £1 5s.; Frankford Canada 10s.; Gateshead 1s. 8d.; Geneva, Switzerland £2; Glasgow 10s., £1, £2; Grimsby 10s.; Harold Park 10s.; Hastings 10s., £5; Hatch End £1; Hemyock 14s. 11d.; High Wycombe £1; Hong Kong £1; Horley £2; Hull 10s., £1, £2; Inverness 5s.; Ipswich £2 7s., £1.; Keith 17s. 3d.; Leeds £1; Letchworth £2 1s. 9d.; Leyland £1; Llanelly 10s.; London E. 12—5s.; S.E. 9—10s.; S.E. 15—10s., £5; S.E. 23—2s., 2s. 6d., 5s., 5s., 10s., 10s., 14s., £1, £1, £1, £1 8s. 6d., £2, £2, £3, £5, £5, £5, £5, £5; S.W.4—10s., £2; Manila, Philippines £27; Minden, Germany £2; Oldham £2 10s.; Porth £1; Port Jervis,

N.Y. 15s. 9d.; Preston £1; Pretoria, South Africa £1 10s.; Reading £2; Redruth £10; Regina, Canada £1; Ryhope 7s. 11d.; St. Austell 5s.; Sale £1; Scunthorpe 7s.; Sheffield £1 10s.; Sicamous, Canada £1 2s.; Southampton 10s.; South Shields £1; Stonebroom £1; Stouffville, Canada £3 5s. 7d.; Stuttgart, Germany £1; Sunbury-on-Thames 10s.; Surbiton £5; Tenterden 3s. 11d.; Toronto, Canada 11s., £1 4s., £2 15s.; Vancouver, Canada 3s., £2; Watford £2; Welling 10s., 10s.; Wigan £1; Winona, Canada £2; Worthing 17s.; York 10s.  
Total £203 12s. 11d.

Arlington, Va. \$2.15; Big Bear Lake, Calif. \$10; Birmingham, Ala. \$2, \$10; Brunswick, Nebr. \$5; Burgenfield, N.J. \$5; Chicago, Ill. \$10.80; Copenhagen, Denmark \$1; Daly City, Calif. \$2; East Corinth, Maine \$6.19; Granite City, Ill. \$10; Korhogo, Ivory Coast \$5; Middleton, Ky. \$1.25; Oaklyn, N.J. \$2; Orlando, Fla. \$2; Oskaloosa, Iowa \$5; Pusan, Korea \$10; St. Petersburg, Fla. \$5; W. Newton, Mass. \$100, \$3.50; Ypsilante, Mich. \$1  
Total \$198.89

Wolhusen, Switzerland Fr.Frs. 50.00  
Lausanne, Switzerland Sw.Frs. 50.00  
Renigunta, A.P. Rs. 3/-; Vejalpore, Gujurat 10/-  
Total Rs. 13/-

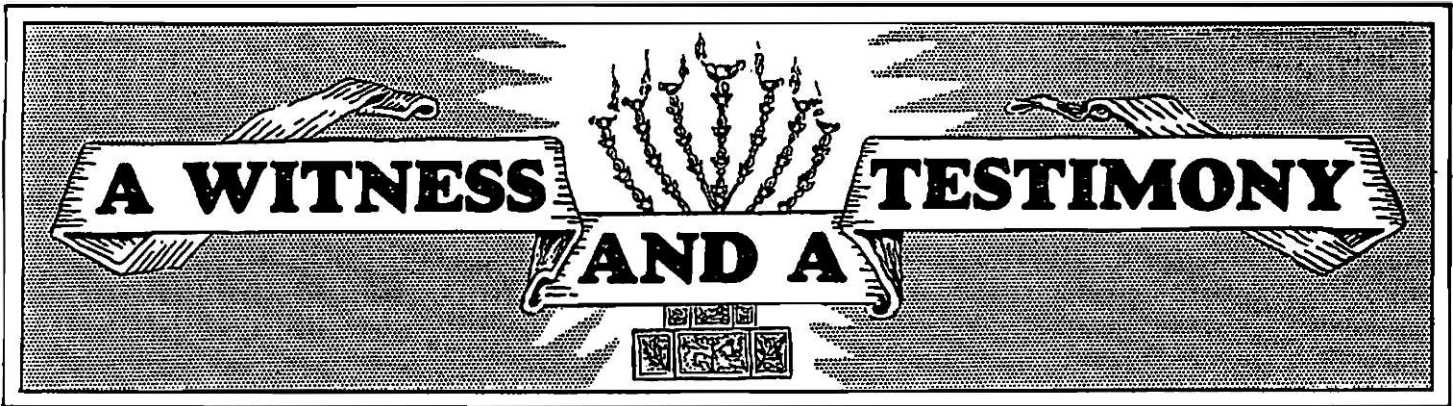
---

We have a few sets of *A Witness and a Testimony* for the years from 1950 to 1962 (six in each year). These can be had by friends who desire them, the only charge being for postage (in advance).

The postage is eight pence in British currency, and eight cents in American—for each set.

## WITNESS AND TESTIMONY LITERATURE

<i>By T. A-S.</i>		THINGS THAT DIFFER . . . . .	1d (\$0.02)
GOD'S REACTIONS TO MAN'S DEFECTIONS . . . . .	7/- (\$1.50)	THE BATTLEGROUND OF THE SOUL . . . . .	1d (\$0.02)
RIVERS OF LIVING WATER . . . . .	6/- (\$1.28)	A GOD THAT HIDETH HIMSELF . . . . .	1d (\$0.02)
PROPHETIC MINISTRY . . . . .	5/6 (\$1.18)	<i>By G.P.</i>	
OUR WARFARE . . . . .	4/6 (\$0.96)	THE GOSPEL IN THE FARMYARD	
PIONEERS OF THE HEAVENLY WAY . . . . .	4/6 (\$0.96)	(For the Children, 110 pages. Illustrated) . . . . .	4/- (\$0.85)
THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO PAUL . . . . .	4/6 (\$0.96)	GOSPEL MESSAGES FROM THE ANTARCTIC	
WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CHRISTIAN . . . . .	4/6 (\$0.96)	(For the Children 170 pages. Illustrated) . . . . .	5/- (\$1.07)
FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE	4/6 (\$0.96)	<i>By H.F.</i>	
THE GOLD OF THE SANCTUARY . . . . .	4/- (\$0.85)	THE CHURCH'S PRAYER AND SPIRITUAL INCREASE	2d (\$0.04)
THE CENTRALITY AND UNIVERSALITY OF THE CROSS	3/- (\$0.64)	THE REALITY OF GOD'S HOUSE . . . . .	2d (\$0.04)
WE BEHELD HIS GLORY (VOL. II) (cloth boards)	4/6 (\$0.96)	THE CHURCH AS GOD WANTS IT TO-DAY . . . . .	2d (\$0.04)
(Art paper covers)	3/6 (\$0.75)	THE CHALLENGE OF THE IMPOSSIBLE {	2d. (\$0.04)
THE BATTLE FOR LIFE . . . . .	2/6 (\$0.53)	1/6 a dozen (\$0.32)	
GOD'S SPIRITUAL HOUSE . . . . .	1/6 (\$0.32)	READY FOR THE KING	
THE WORK OF GOD AT THE END TIME . . . . .	1/6 (\$0.32)	(For the Children, 48 pages. Illustrated) . . . . .	1/6 (\$0.32)
HIS GREAT LOVE . . . . .	1/6 (\$0.32)	ON WINGS OF FAITH	
THE SCHOOL OF CHRIST . . . . .	1/6 (\$0.32)	(For the Children, 52 pages. Illustrated) . . . . .	2/- (\$0.43)
UNION WITH CHRIST . . . . .	1/6 (\$0.32)	BURIED TREASURE	
GOD HATH SPOKEN . . . . .	1/- (\$0.21)	(For the Children, 48 pages. Illustrated) . . . . .	2/- (\$0.43)
THE ULTIMATE ISSUE OF THE UNIVERSE . . . . .	9d (\$0.16)	<i>By A.I.K.</i>	
THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT . . . . .	6d (\$0.11)	THIS IS THE VICTORY . . . . .	3d (\$0.05)
THE WATCHWORD OF THE SON OF MAN . . . . .	4d (\$0.07)	<i>By T.L.M.</i>	
BETHANY . . . . .	3d (\$0.05)	ENTERING INTO LIFE ( <i>The Way of Salvation</i> ) . . . . .	9d (\$0.16)
THE SUPREME VOCATION . . . . .	3d (\$0.05)	ESCAPE INTO CHRIST . . . . .	9d (\$0.16)
CHRIST—ALL, AND IN ALL . . . . .	3d (\$0.05)	<i>By W.N.</i>	
CHRIST IN HEAVEN AND CHRIST WITHIN . . . . .	2d (\$0.04)	SIT WALK STAND . . . . .	2/- (\$0.45)
THE ARM OF THE LORD . . . . .	2d (\$0.04)	An extract from	
THE GOD OF THE AMEN {	2d (\$0.04)	THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE . . . . .	3d (\$0.05)
THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA } 1/6 a dozen (\$0.32)		<i>By W.L.</i>	
THE CROSS OF CHRIST		A GOD WHO HIDES HIMSELF . . . . .	2d (\$0.04)
( <i>The Zero hour of the Creation</i> ) . . . . .	1d (\$0.02)	SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE (CONSECRATION) }	2d. (\$0.04)
		1/6 a dozen (\$0.32)	



MARCH — APRIL, 1963.

Vol. 41. No. 2.

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL ... ..	25	PRESSING ON FOR THE PRIZE ... ..	35
THE NEW ERA ... ..	27	THE STEWARDSHIP OF THE MYSTERY (v) ...	38
HORIZONED BY RESURRECTION ... ..	32	FOR BOYS AND GIRLS ... ..	42
LEADERSHIP (III <i>continued</i> ) ... ..	44		

EDITORIAL

IN seeking the Lord for the specific note to strike at the commencement of and over this further issue of the paper, in the quiet hours of the night that note has seemed to sound in one's own heart. It seems to be wrapped up in a phrase used by our Lord when He was about to leave Jerusalem and all that it stood for. In His tone there was a mixture of sorrow, pain, reproach, rebuke, anger, warning. He cried: "If thou hadst known in this day . . . the things that belong unto peace, but now they are hid" etc., or, "If thou hadst known in this *thy* day", etc. (Luke xix. 43). The part especially underlined is "this thy day".

The Bible as a book of the history of God's ways with man is marked by that word 'Day', in the sense of a period and phase of time. Such 'Days' always had two sides. On the one side it was what obtained with man: the conditions, the tendencies, the ways. On the other side was what God was doing in relation to those ways. Those 'Days' were usually distinguished by some particular feature which stood out and made it possible for ever to speak of such times as 'the days when—such-and-such was the predominant characteristic'. For instance: there were the 'days of Enoch'. Enoch comes down in history as the man who walked with God. To say that is to be invidious, to make a comparison and a contrast. It is to say that, in Enoch's days the general condition was definitely otherwise; men did not walk with God, they walked away and apart from God, and the quite unusual thing in those days was for a man to walk with God. Jesus spoke of "As it was in the days of Noah", and then proceeded to describe the particular features of those days.

So we go on. The forty years of Israel's sojourn in the wilderness are spoken of as "the day of the temptation (tempting of God) in the wilderness". The whole setting and nature of the ministry of Prophets is referred to as "in the days of the Prophet . . .". Jesus referred to His own brief period in the flesh on this earth as "this thy day". He constantly referred to a coming dispensation as "in



## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

that day ". We speak of " In the days of the Apostles ". Thus we characterize certain times and happenings right down the centuries as such-and-such ' days ', or such-and-such ' a day '. Well, what is the point? If we are to catch the warning or pleading tone in the Lord's cry: " If thou hadst known ", giving the emphasis to the " If " which some translators render " Oh, that thou hadst ", surely the point is that it is all-important, it is of vital consequence that we should be aware of the particular nature and significance of the day in which *we* live. It has ever and always been the special function of Prophetic ministry, or shall we say, the specific work of the prophetic function, to make the people of God aware of the nature and meaning of the particular period " Day " in which they lived. This undoubtedly was true of the Prophets of Israel. It was distinctly true of the greatest of all Prophets—our Lord Himself. This was that prophetic aspect of the Apostles themselves: and it is this with which the Bible closes in great emphasis through John. Again and again since what are called ' New Testament days '—or ' times ', God has raised up a Voice to make His people know what belonged to their particular time. Sometimes it has been a man: sometimes a movement: sometimes personal: sometimes corporate. The Wind of God has blown and men have been aware of a certain ' going '.

Too often, as in the day of our Lord, prejudice, preoccupation with something temporal and earthly, religious traditionalism, etc., have dulled the spiritual senses, dimmed or blinded the spiritual eyes, and the " day of visitation " has left them high and dry. Having done no more than intimate a very big and far-reaching matter, we are under the necessity of putting our finger upon the particular feature of our own " Day ". And yet, it is not peculiar to our day, it is the persistent enemy of God's interests and God's people through all time. But it seems to have become more widely and paralytically real in the last few years than ever.

It is the deadening hand of mediocrity. The dictionary describes the mediocre as ' the middle rate ', ' the moderate degree ', ' middling '. In other words, the general as over against the specific; the indistinct as over against the unmistakable; the lesser as over against the absolute; the small as over against the immense; the meagre as over against the abundant. These contrasts could be multiplied but they are sufficient for indication. In no realms are there the outstanding leaders, teachers, preachers, artists, singers, politicians, etc., of the last century. Only here and there is there a man who is a little above his fellows and a bit more outstanding as a leader, preacher, or teacher, than what is general.

How ordinary has almost everything become. We call to mind the Piersons, Gordons, Simpsons, Moules, Webb-Peploes, Meyers, Hudson Taylors, Spurgeons, Parkers, and the whole galaxy of spiritual giants in the realm of Christianity, and we say, ' Where are there such to-day '. There seems to be no voice which rings out so that the whole Church can hear God's distinctive word to His people to-day. No specific testimony is given a chance. While there is a big quest for God to do a new thing, God must be careful not to upset tradition or interfere with the set and established order or system.

Everything that does not conform to a fixed and ' recognized ' design is suspect. The historical form must be preserved. Of course, we are *not* referring to fundamental and essential doctrine. We are concerned with the absolute sovereignty of the Holy Spirit. Too many watchdogs of man's fears have been set around the citadel of truth. We have known of several instances of outstandingly used servants of God who had a vital message for the times, because they spoke—incidentally—of something that was not in *the* doctrinal economy of the particular convention movement, being for ever after excluded from the platform; to the eternal loss of God's people, and we have lived to see the movement become mediocre and finding great difficulty in getting ' speakers ' with a real and adequate message. The Apostle Paul was a positive menace to all mediocrity resultant from fear, jealousy, compromise, and prejudice.

The note has been struck and to it all that follows in the ministry of this little paper is tuned. The Lord, in faithfulness, keep us from falling a prey to this historic enemy—mediocrity, the middle measure, loss of distinctiveness of testimony, definiteness of vision and purpose. We have an immense Christ; a superlative calling; and unsearchable riches of resource.

EDITOR

## THE NEW ERA

EDITOR'S NOTE. *Through the years from the time when we were entrusted with "This Ministry" a governing motive has been that of the strengthening, enriching, and enlightening of the Lord's people, in order that they may be the better fitted to be His servants. Within the wider range of its purpose there has always been a specific object of 'a ministry to the ministry', so that the teaching should never be an end in itself, or be resolved into static and merely localized circles, but move out and on in ever-widening circles. It is our very real concern that this ministry shall feed and result in ministry, and that the torch shall be continually passed on to an extending chain of torchbearers.*

*Recently there has come to us a strengthened sense of the perils of over localization, and we have been drawn to see anew that the Lord reacted against this at the beginning when He "scattered abroad" the Church in Jerusalem so that they "went everywhere". This has become a new burden with the editor.*

*In going through a lot of old papers, I have come upon some pages torn from a book many years ago. I cannot call to mind the book or the author, but, with apologies if I am wrong, I herewith pass on to our readers this vital message, with the prayer that it will stir anew the flame of zeal that the Word of the Lord may grow exceedingly through a revitalized ministry.*

**T**HIS wonderful period of expansion, the new era even more than our own, may be taken as extending from the Ascension of our Lord till the end of the first century, when the long life of the Apostle John was either just coming to an end or had not long ended. For our purpose, however, it may more conveniently be taken as extending from Pentecost to the year 112 or thereby, when Pliny sent his famous letter to the Emperor Trajan. Pliny was one of the most accomplished men of his time; and this official document throws welcome light on the situation when the Church was entering on the work of the second century, and had no longer the guidance and help of the inspired Apostles who had seen the Lord. His testimony, too, as to the extent to which the Gospel had spread in Asia Minor, and as to how the life of the Christians had impressed an impartial outsider, is of unique value as showing what had been achieved in the era which had just closed.

In the days of His flesh, our Lord Himself never

left the Holy Land, except perhaps when He went into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. But He laid deep and broad the foundations on which His people were to build in the days to come; He began that work of the Kingdom which cannot but be universal, since it is spiritual; and already in vision He saw the peoples of the East and the West, of the North and the South, rallying round His Cross. His instructions regarding Missionary work are more definite than those about any other form of service. Time after time He gave orders that such work was to be done, from the day when He called the fishermen by the Sea of Galilee to be fishers of men, till the day when as the Risen Lord He commissioned His Apostles to make disciples of all nations. The very name Apostle indicates that those who bore it were to be messengers or Missionaries, first to the lost sons of their own house, then to the cities of the Samaritans, and then on the highways of world-traffic, which led to the most distant heathen nations.

To carry the Gospel to the Gentiles was a work so novel and so difficult that commands and encouragements alike were multiplied in order that it might be done. The earlier orders to go to their own countrymen had been only temporary; but when the standing orders to go out among the heathen came, they only made explicit what had really been implicit from the first. His followers were called to be "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world". . .

The Descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost vividly illustrated both what the Great Commission meant and how it was to be obeyed; for then as now the supreme question was one of power. Yet even the Apostles were slow to lift their anchors and adventure out on the deep. One object-lesson after another was required for the interpretation of what seems clear enough now in the light of its exposition in history. Indeed, persecution had to come before they went everywhere preaching the Word. But when once this violent dispersion had released the slumbering powers of expansion, every man and woman of the dispersed became a Missionary. After Stephen's death, for example, they went as far as Phenice, Cyprus, and Antioch which ere long became a second Christian metropolis. Perhaps some went as far as Rome, for Andronicus and Junia, who are mentioned in the Epistle to that church, were disciples before Paul. Indeed, one



## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

of the striking features of the expansion is that often the decisive steps seem to have been taken by nameless evangelists, who did not keep silence about the new faith for which they were wanderers and exiles. The whole theory of Apostolic Missions is summed up in the words of Peter: "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Their message grew out of their own personal experience, and was attested by it.

The first decisive indication of God's purpose regarding the regions beyond came to the Church through a revival which broke out among the Samaritans; for then, as always, the Divine message came most clearly in actual events. These Samaritans, who were half-heathen by descent, professed a corrupt form of Judaism, and Philip the Evangelist was honoured to be the preacher under whom many of them turned to Christ. Our Lord Himself had, of course, done tender, gracious things among them during His earthly ministry; yet that revival came as a revelation, we might almost say as a surprise, to the Apostles at Jerusalem. They were, however, ready to follow wherever the Spirit led, and were prepared to be surprised. They saw the Gospel passing beyond the confines of the Jews, and they knew by the fruits of Philip's preaching that he had done right in going among the Samaritans. They knew it then just as in later years Bunyan knew that God had opened his lips, and Wesley knew that it was right to preach in the open air, by the blessing which God gave them. Then the wholly Gentile Cornelius followed the half-Gentile Samaritan into the fold of Christ, and his conversion ranks with that of Paul himself as a great landmark in the history of Missions.

The extent to which it was epoch-making can be estimated in part by the space given to the details of the story by the sacred writer, as well as by the way in which Peter had to vindicate his action in baptizing a man who had never been circumcised. For part of the significance of what happened lies in the fact that Cornelius became a Christian without also or first becoming a Jew. The conclusion to which the authorities at Jerusalem were led by the blessed logic of events marks the beginning of the Foreign Mission era: "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." They realised what God was saying to them in the concrete events through which He rendered His purpose of grace visible to those who had eyes to see, and they gladly followed on to know the Lord.

And it was well that they were thus prepared

for the next emergency, which was near at hand. For meanwhile, some of the scattered preachers, pressing on in the pathway which the Holy Spirit was opening up for them, were boldly preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles in Antioch, and there also the blessed fruits of their daring were showing that they were doing the will of God. We cannot tell whether these preachers had heard of the conversion of Cornelius; but that precedent enabled the Jerusalem church to deal with the new situation in the right way. God had graciously prepared His people to meet the emergency. Barnabas was sent down to see what God was doing, and to give guidance in the crisis. With a prescience equally Divine, Paul was brought in to be his colleague in the work which grew out of the Antioch revival, and then the work of winning the Gentiles for Christ was begun in earnest, and the great Apostle of the Gentile world was at his God-assigned post.

From the time of Pentecost onwards it was clearly indicated that in this work of expansion the Holy Ghost is the great propagating power. Ours is a Missionary era because it is the era or dispensation of the Holy Ghost. It was He who inspired the first Missionaries, such as Peter and Stephen, Barnabas and Paul, for the work of winning mankind for Christ—"Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them"; and we shall only understand the secret of their triumphs, or see them repeated in our day, when we too are wholly loyal to the ever-blessed Third Person in the glorious Trinity, and are obedient unto Him.

From the first, too, these Missionaries of the Cross found that they were called to conflict; and that in their onset for God and His truth they were in direct opposition to the dominant world-powers, political and ecclesiastical alike. Christianity had scarcely emerged from Palestine when she found herself engaged in a life-and-death struggle with the whole strength of Imperial Rome. The Romans, who had a genius for government as well as for conquest, were accustomed to tolerate all religions if only these were old and national and had no secret gatherings which might cover conspiracies against the State. But from the first they were at least doubtful about Christianity, which was neither national nor ancient, and which had a worship they could not understand.

Even their wisest statesmen seem to have felt an instinctive dread of this new religion, which had neither temples nor idols, and which rose superior to every local or racial limitation, claiming the whole earth for its Lord. They felt somehow that



MARCH — APRIL, 1963.

Christianity and Rome were alike imperial in their aspirations and outlook, and that war between them was inevitable. Either the one or the other must conquer. There was no room in the Empire, vast as it was, for both; and the prevalence of this conviction among the best of the Romans gives us some idea of the courage and consistency with which the early Christians did their work.

There was room in the Pantheon for all sorts of tribal deities. The presence of their idols there only made the glory of Rome seem all the greater, and increased the triumphs of her returning soldiers. But there was no room either in the Pantheon or the Empire for this new religion, which was sometimes called "atheistic" because it lacked the ordinary external symbols, but which had gone out conquering and to conquer, measuring its might with that of Imperial Rome herself. When Christianity, with a sublime audacity, assailed the Empire which in itself had almost become a religion, with the Emperor as its concrete and deified embodiment, the onset was made on no ignorant or degraded system, but on a vast organization, hoary with antiquity and flushed with success over every foe.

In many ways, indeed, the work of the first evangelists was not unlike that which our own Missionaries have to do now among the educated and self-satisfied . . . This explains the paradox that some of the best emperors and noblest Romans, from the view-point of the Empire, were the most strenuous foes and persecutors of the Gospel. They saw, as Paul did in his unconverted days, that there could be no half-measures where Christianity was involved. They felt that they must either yield to its claims or set themselves to crush it out. Thus it was that it was into a world at once strangely prepared for them, and yet bitterly antagonistic to them, that the first Missionaries went with their story of salvation for the worst, on terms of free grace.

It is very remarkable how little we know about these first evangelists themselves, although many things have come to light even in our own time to show how devoted and fruitful their work was. Some of them we know by name—men like Timothy and Titus, Barnabas and Mark, Epaphroditus and Apollos—and that is all we know even of the majority of the Apostles. We know a little about Paul, a little less about Peter and John, and that is practically the whole. There were no religious newspapers in those days, nor any Missionary reports; but their names are in the Lamb's Book of Life, and they live in their work, which is ever

so much better than living merely in the pages of history. Through the mists of envious oblivion, broken here and there by shafts of light, we can see brave soldiers of the Cross, as they faced every danger in their devotion to their Saviour and their compassion for the souls of men, and pressed out into the deeper darkness beyond the boundaries of the Empire as even the dauntless soldiers of Rome did not dare to do. Within the first Christian century they had penetrated the wilds of distant Scythia and Caledonia, perhaps even so far as India; dying for their faith if need be, bringing hope to many a despairing soul and kindling the love-light in many a sorrowful eye.

In the absence of any reliable information, tradition has been busy with many of these unknown workers and their work. But its only value is that it embodies the general impression of the striking results of their undoubted enterprise. Andrew is represented as preaching in Scythia, Thomas in Parthia, Matthew in Arabia. Matthias is said to have devoted himself to Ethiopia; James the son of Alphæus to Egypt; Simon Zelotes to Mauritania and Libya; and Judas Thaddeus to Mesopotamia. The Spaniards claim James the brother of our Lord as their national evangelist; the French say that the Gospel came to their land through Dionysius the Areopagite, and Lazarus; while as regards Britain, it is claimed that Simon Zelotes, Joseph of Arimathea, and even Paul, preached the Gospel there. But all this is little more than a determination to apportion territories to the men whose names have come down to us.

It is very striking how little is known even of John and Peter, the pillar Apostles. They are prominent in the early chapters of the Acts, where they are closely associated with each other; but after that we are left largely to conjecture as to what they did and where they did it. John's later doings mostly gather round Ephesus, where he seems to have lived almost, if not quite, to the end of the first century, and to have perished by martyrdom in the persecution under Domitian. He has left us three Letters; the Gospel which bears his name; and the Book of the Apocalypse, or unfolding.

As for Peter, his name became associated probably against his will, with the Judaising party, who in their opposition to Paul declared, "We are of Cephas." There has been much discussion as to whether he was ever in Rome. There can be none as to the fact that he was not the founder of the church at Rome, as Romanists allege. Many modern scholars accept the tradition of a visit to

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

the seven-hilled city ; and by the end of the second century the conviction prevailed that he was martyred there. But there is no proof whatever of this in the "dry light", and there is much to support the contention that he had no association whatever with the Roman church. His Epistles seem to connect him very specially with the four Roman provinces which we now call Asia Minor ; and we must think of him as for the most part in that region, and specially as labouring among his fellow-countrymen according to the concordat with Paul, until he too won the martyr's crown.

The conversion of Paul, about the year 35, was of infinite significance for the work among the heathen ; and it is his Missionary energy which most of all fills the New Testament. We have some details as to his three great Missionary journeys; and what with references and allusions in his Letters and what we learn from the Acts, we can draw at least a profile picture of the man, unquestionably one of the supreme leaders of our race. His first journey began at Cyprus and ended at Antioch, and saw many converts won and not a few churches organized. The second journey began in the year 52 and took him into Europe, where he founded a church at Philippi and spent two years and a half in Corinth. The third journey, which brings us down to the year 55, took him from Antioch through Asia Minor to Ephesus, where he remained more or less constantly for upward of two years. Thereafter we find him in Jerusalem, where he was apprehended and finally sent to Rome, which he had long desired to visit. After two imprisonments there, and much literary and other work, he died for the faith for which he had lived splendidly so long, in the year 67 or 68. He was the greatest Missionary who has ever lived, perhaps the greatest servant our Lord has ever had.

We can only find out indirectly how these Apostolic Missionaries did their work, and what was the outcome of their obedience and consecration. But this indirect evidence is continually increasing in interest and value. The ends of the earth are now coming on us, and new light is constantly being thrown on the rapid and inevitable spread of the Christian religion. Take, for example, what we now know of the different ways in which the various churches were founded and grew up—such as those in Rome and Galatia. The Roman church was not founded by an Apostle, and no great name is associated with its origin. Some have attributed its beginnings to preachers who came from Pentecost filled with the Good News. Probably, however, its existence was due rather

to unknown emigrants, and to the constant communication which was always taking place between the capital and the rest of the Empire. From the first, too, the large Jewish element in the city would be specially interested in what was going on and was turning the world 'upside down'. A thoughtful modern writer prefers to account for its origin by what he calls the "process of quiet and as it were fortuitous filtration" which was everywhere going on—a pregnant suggestion well worth following up.

Primitive Christianity was self-propagating. The great farewell Commission, as a formal injunction, came to be unnecessary. The impulse was in the Gospel itself. Not that the method of filtration was the only method at work. In Galatia we know that the church was founded by the great Missionary of the Gentiles, who was taken there on one of his epoch-making tours. He was passing through the district, probably without any intention of remaining in it, when he was struck down by his thorn in the flesh, whatever that was, and had to remain for a time. But Paul could never be anywhere, even in sickness, without being an evangelist ; and the result was a community or church of the living God. And so with the other churches. Each has its own gracious history, and each tells of faithful workers known or unknown.

Among the agencies at work, Christian philanthropy was one of the most persuasive. All that men needed was to be found in Christ ; and in that era He was preached and lived by those for whom He had been everything and through whom His glory shone forth. It was not proselytes they sought. Their efforts were not put forth to secure numbers or authority, but to bless men through Him who alone could understand or save them. The true Missionary enthusiasm depends on being possessed by the Divine passion of love to seek and save the lost.

Much discussion has gathered round the extent to which the Mission work of the Apostolic Era was successful alike extensively and intensively ; in point of numbers and in point of influence. One calculation which has been often handed round has it that at the close of the first century there was a Christian population of about five millions ; whereas another has it that there were probably about two hundred thousand, a discrepancy which at least shows how little definite information we possess. We know enough, however, to suggest that the smaller figure is a gross under-estimate, and that the larger is probably nearer the truth.



MARCH — APRIL, 1963.

Some idea of the extent of the progress made may be derived from what took place during the persecutions under Nero and Domitian. Tacitus says that during the dreadful Neronian persecution an immense multitude suffered for what he calls their superstition ; and it was not otherwise in the later persecution under Domitian which began in the year 95. There are also various references in the literature of the period to events in Rome, which support the contention that very great progress had been made. As early as the year 52, for example, according to Suetonius, the disturbances in the Jewish quarter in Rome, owing to disputes between Jews and Christians, were such that the Emperor Claudius was led to banish all Jews from the city. Then, only six years later, in the year 58, Paul himself, in his letter to the Romans, speaks of their faith as "proclaimed through the whole world" ; while other six years after, that is in the year 64, as we have just seen, "an immense multitude" in the Imperial city suffered for their faith in Christ.

Light is also thrown on the extent of the Christian conquest during the first century by what we now know about the kind of people who were being won. The ordinary idea is that progress was made mainly among the uneducated and the slave population ; and it goes without saying that the Gospel must have been specially welcome among the masses of despairing men and women who were wearing out their lives in bitterness and sorrow. But Sir William Ramsay, who has done much to reconstruct the first century for us, and whose interest in this theme is as remarkable as his scholarship, says that at first Christianity spread more rapidly among the educated than among the uneducated. The German writer Schultze, too, says: "It was not the base elements which came into the Church, but, on the contrary, the better strata of the Roman population—the artificers, the shopkeepers, and the small landed proprietors ; therefore preponderatingly the under and middle portion of the citizen class, who in the general moral and religious dissolution of heathenism still proved themselves the soundest classes in the community." Dean Merivale also has it that at first the Gospel was embraced by persons approaching to what we should call the middle classes in their condition, their education, and their moral views.

In the year 57, a lady of illustrious birth, Pomponia Graecina, the wife of Aulus Plautius, the conqueror of Britain, was tried before the Senate on the charge of being tainted with "foreign

superstition"—that is, of being a Christian. In the reign of Domitian, too, we read that Flavius Clemens, the consul, and Domitilla his wife (the husband being the Emperor's cousin and the wife his niece), were put on trial for "atheism"—that is, for being Christians. Well may Harnack say regarding this incident. "What a change! Between fifty and sixty years after Christianity reached Rome, a daughter of the Emperor (Vespasian) embraces the faith ; and thirty years after the fearful persecutions of Nero, the presumptive heirs to the throne were brought up in a Christian home."

In addition to these illustrious converts, others not less renowned were at the same time accused of being Christians ; among them being Glabrio, who had been consul with Trajan ; and who died for his faith. He belonged to one of the wealthiest and most illustrious families in the State. The impression created by such Confessors is borne out by the incidental testimony of Scripture as to the kind of converts the first-century Missionaries won for their Lord. There were many from among the débris, many of the flotsam and jetsam, and the common people heard the Word gladly. But we hear also of Sergius Paulus, the Roman ruler in Malta ; and of the Asiarchs or chief rulers of Asia at Ephesus, as on the Saviour's side. In the same company of the redeemed we also meet men like Dionysius, a member of the Council of Areopagus at Athens ; Erastus, the public treasurer at Corinth ; the centurion Cornelius, the physician Luke, and Crispus, the ruler of the Jewish synagogue at Corinth.

Finally, we have the remarkable testimony borne alike to the extent of the conquests of the Apostolic Era and to the character of the converts, which is to be found in the letter sent by the Roman Governor Pliny to the Emperor Trajan about the year 112. In this important State document, the perplexed Governor asks for directions as to how he was to deal with the Christians with whom he was constantly coming into contact. It sets forth that the Christian religion was professed by "many of all ages and ranks, and of both sexes" ; that the "movement was not confined to the cities, but had spread into the villages and country" ; that the temples of the old religions were "almost deserted" ; that the sacred rites "were interrupted" ; that the victims for sacrifice could find "very few purchasers" ; and that all this had been going on for a long time. Pliny wrote from Bithynian Pontus, an extensive province in Asia Minor, and there is no good reason for thinking that that province was in any way exceptional in regard to



## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

the extent to which it had been evangelized.

Beyond any question a great and glorious work had been accomplished by the Missionaries of the Apostolic Era, known and unknown ; accomplished in the face of difficulties and dangers which might have daunted the bravest, and in spite of the fact that Imperial Rome itself, that power which had swept everything else before it, had once and again set itself to crush out the new and obnoxious faith with all his might. But then, as now, the Gospel of the grace of God was mightier than the mightiest. Everything that the world counts mighty was hostile to the Christians ; yet they overcame, because they were true to their Lord and to the spirit of His Gospel.

The outstanding characteristic of the era from the Missionary standpoint is that every believer was a Missionary. "They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word" ; and they who were allowed to remain at home preached the Word too. They had, indeed, no choice. The whole social order was such that a Christian could only remain a secret disciple by denying his Lord, and a disciple who does that is no disciple at all. Necessity was laid on them ; they had to let their light shine ; and it was inevitable that they who knew them should be convinced that they had been with God. "A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid."

SELECTED

## HORIZONED BY RESURRECTION

## JAMES — THE LORD'S BROTHER

*Read : John vii. 5 ; 1 Cor. xv. 7 ; Gal. i. 18, 19 ; Acts xii. 17, xv. 13, xxi. 18.*

LET us remind ourselves of the particular object that we have in view in this message on Horizons. We are pointing out that Resurrection—the Resurrection of Christ—sets the sphere within which, and by which, everything in the New Testament is governed. Resurrection pre-supposes death, but Resurrection is more than resuscitation (which was the case in the 'sign-raising' of the physically dead, both in the Old and New Testaments). Resurrection, as differing from resuscitation, carries with it an absolute difference in character and spiritual position. Therefore Resurrection, both in the case of Christ, and in that of believers in relationship with Him, involves a test, a challenge, a demand, and a possibility.

In order to understand this, and all the teaching of the New Testament regarding believer's union with Christ in death and resurrection, we are looking at some of the people most closely in touch with Him before and after the Cross. We are seeking to see what Resurrection required where they were concerned. It is evident that it did mean something very drastic in them, but the measure of that effect varied in the different cases, although it was *meant* to be utter in *every* one. So we come to the next in the group—

## JAMES — THE LORD'S BROTHER.

As in each previous case we are to find our clue by identifying his human type. You should have carefully read the Scriptures which we have given

at the head of this consideration, for it is they which lead to the verifying of our conclusions.

It is far from easy to delineate the category of James without doing injury to the very real values of that category, and, while it is so necessary to show how much the demands of Resurrection apply to this type, we shall certainly seek to be both fair to, and appreciative of, those values.

We must remember that James lived with his brother Jesus in Nazareth for nearly thirty years. That is a long time to be at such close quarters with an elder brother. After that he was never far away from Jesus during the three and a half years of His ministry and work. Then he was somewhere not remote from Jesus during the scenes of the trial and crucifixion.

Upon those thirty three and a half years with *all* that they held the verdict as to James is that he did not believe in his brother Jesus. No more terrible verdict could ever be passed in the light of everything that was true, and what an 'everything' it was!

This needs explaining and the explanation can be largely found in the kind of person that James was. That kind or type is not difficult to identify, for it is the largest category of all, and it is all around us. There is one word that defines and explains it, and into that word all the truly good and the truly perilous is gathered. That word is the word 'practical'.

It sounds good ; yes, and it so largely is, but if you have already found James a big question and problem, it is because of this particular constitution. Let us analyse it.

Firstly, the people of this 'Practical' category are the people for whom success is the criterion of everything. They will reserve their confidence until they are sure that you are going to make a success of life, and be a success yourself. If you are successful according to their ideas and standards you will be accepted and trusted. If you are not a success—as they judge success—then they have no place for you and nothing will substitute this with them. They will just *not* believe in you. No doubt there was plenty in the nature, behaviour, and disposition of Jesus in Nazareth that was not of that tough and forceful and 'practical' (?) kind that James believed was necessary to position and power, and this made him definitely apprehensive and reserved as to Jesus and as to what kind of a success He would be *in the world*.

But when it came to the period of public life, every reserve was—as he believed—justified, and all his natural susceptibilities were offended. This category is the one which is absolutely unwilling to jeopardize position, prestige, and standing, especially where the top people are concerned. It will suspect and mistrust the common people's reactions, and only be influenced by the attitude of 'the people who count and matter'. The way that Jesus was taking was positively dangerous and completely contrary to all 'success' where the 'high-ups' were concerned. From his own standpoint and according to his own standards the judgment of James was quite correct; Jesus was 'riding for a fall', and the end of His life would have 'failure' written large over it. His whole course was—in spite of the temporary popularity—dangerous to success!

We leave the question as to whether Jesus was—from Heaven's standpoint—really a failure. There are some 'failures' which are immense successes.

Secondly, this category consists of those who seriously lack imagination. They just cannot see beyond what they would call 'present hard facts'. Everything for them lies on the surface, and what is to them 'obvious' is the last argument. Their watchword being 'Be practical', they are intolerant of the 'spiritual' and what they would (wrongly) call 'mystical', and 'up in the clouds'. For them the hard facts are the immediate or short-term results. Yes, 'results' are more important than *how* you get them: get results, that is what matters. Policy is more than principle with them. Get your end and don't worry too much as to *how*.

The result is very often a cold cruelty; insen-

sitive to the feelings of others. The finer elements of sympathy, kindness, consideration, and even courtesy do not occur to them to be important or indispensable. They have a 'blind-spot' where the sensitive *feelings* of others are concerned. They are strangers to true imagination, and foes of what *they* interpret that word to mean. Their idea of imagination is that it means conjuring up pictures—mental pictures—which are unreal and impossible, whereas true imagination is the faculty which enables one to place himself in circumstances which demand understanding.

The 'practical' makeup can crush down anything which gets in the way of its set purpose, and ride rough-shod over friendship, family relationships, and all that is deemed competitive. It is the temperament of commerce and commercialism.

Of course, the intensity of the temperament varies in different individual cases. Some are softer and kinder than others, but, nevertheless, the disposition is more or less a distinct one.

There are paradoxes and anomalies in this category. Full of activities of real value, service of necessity, and hard-working—often sacrificial—labours, without which the world would be a desolate place, they—at the same time—cannot stay to go beneath the surface, and are impatient with those who do. We just must have our Marthas as well as our Marys or we might not get our dinner, but a balance of the two would make the ideal, whereas Martha before Resurrection thinks that everybody ought to be a Martha and that Mary is a time-waster and not 'practical'.

We go on. This type is that which holds things with an iron hand and will never let go unless forced to do so by being completely frustrated. It is marked by a superiority of judgment. Seldom do they know what they do not know. Indeed, they can do things better than anyone else, and they find it the most difficult function in the orchestra to play 'second fiddle', while often they are not qualified to do otherwise.

While this is a general and by no means exhaustive delineation of this particular category of human nature, it is sufficient for us to delineate the natural class to which James, the Lord's brother, belonged.

Up to the Crucifixion of Jesus, James was evidently rigidly true to type, and was definitely an unbeliever in the deity and Messiahship of his brother (John vii. 3 - 5). At some time—probably late—in the forty days after the Resurrection, Jesus made a personal appearance to James (I Cor. xv. 7). Thereafter James comes into view as hold-

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

ing a prominent position in the Church in Jerusalem, firstly as equal with Peter, and then, as Peter moved out to wider ministry (which James seems never to have done), James takes leadership there.

All the relevant references need to be read, but a very significant statement occurs in Galatians ii. 12: “. . . certain came from James”, with serious immediate effects—even with Peter.

There is no question as to the conversion of James regarding the *Person* of Jesus. His Letter has such statements as: “James, a bondservant of the Lord Jesus Christ” (i. 1); “. . . our Lord Jesus Christ” (ii. 1); and “. . . the coming of the Lord” (v. 7, 8).

As we have said, there are things of great importance in his Letter and it is not a matter of either rejecting or discounting them. But—and it is a very big ‘but’—we can only feel that there was an element of tragedy in James. The Cross and the Resurrection went no further than half-way into the constitution of James, and therefore we have to regard him as for ever a halfway Christian. He kept one foot in Judaism and the other in Christianity, playing for safety. He always maintained a ‘go slow’ policy over extra-Jewish expansion. He cautioned care in opening the door to what was not of the tradition; what was not the ‘established order’; to any innovation or change. His influence kept a large part of the Church in Jerusalem in fear and bondage. Dr. Alexander White has some rather strong things to say about James in his *Bible Characters*.

But our purpose is to show one thing. If the Cross and the nature of Resurrection-life do not go more than half-way into our natural constitution, while our ‘Fundamentalism’ or ‘Evangelicalism’, our personal faith and devotion to the Lord Jesus may be unquestionable, we may yet be a *spiritual* tragedy.

Do think of *all* that James was associated with: thirty years of the closest contact with Christ; three-and-a-half years of His ministry, teaching, and work; a personal witness and experience of the risen Lord, and Pentecost! But—he had never seen the immense universal significance of that One. The apprehension of Stephen and Paul was almost foreign to him, and he found no difficulty in holding things locally into a set, historic mould. ‘Heavenliness’, ‘Spirituality’, ‘Universality’, such like terms as are characteristic of Paul and John are not the vocabulary of James, indeed they are suspect.

Were it not that we are familiar with this tragedy

in our own time we would not have believed it possible. To have so much and be so limited; to have been so closely in touch with greater fulnesses and then to show that we have not really seen their meaning and reality. To be so full of devotion, of good works, of sacrificial service, but that people should meet so little of the Lord Himself in us, and that our effect should be to limit the Lord rather than magnify Him, this surely is tragedy.

It would seem that the real explanation was that James had never been *really* broken. He remained intact. The devastation and desolating which came on Paul, and in a lesser degree on Peter, never was allowed to get through the frigid soul of James. We value so much in what he wrote and recognize the great importance of practicality in the Christian life. We cannot do without this contribution. We see the beauty of the Bethany home when, through sorrow, suffering, death, and resurrection, the friction has gone and Mary and Martha are complementary and adjusted, both necessary.

James holds a warning, it is a historic warning. The slogan: ‘Back to Jerusalem’, if that means back to the Jerusalem of James, may mean back to limitation, back to the static and legal.

Dr. Campbell Morgan had very real insight when he said in his lectures on ‘Acts’ (chapter viii. 1 - 13):—

‘The martyrdom of Stephen created a crisis in the history of the Church. In reading the Acts, we find that from this point onward Jerusalem is no longer the centre of interest. It almost fades from the page. This is not loss; but great gain. When Jerusalem ceases to be the centre of interest, the record does not suffer in any way, nor does it reflect upon Jerusalem. The local, the temporal, the material, are of little importance in the Church of God. The universal, the eternal, the spiritual are supreme. It was of the very spirit of an old and past economy to fasten upon a geographical centre, and to depend upon material symbols. The Church now moves out on the great pathway of her victorious business, independent of Jerusalem. This is the supreme revelation of this book of the Acts of the Apostles. Not easily did they learn the lesson, for the Apostles clung to Jerusalem, but the great spiritual movement, independent of Jerusalem . . . went forward; not slighting Jerusalem, not unmindful of Jerusalem, nor careless of its past history and early contribution; but far more influenced by the vision of Jerusalem from on high, the mother of us all . . . No longer hampered by localities and temporalities, the surging spirit-



MARCH — APRIL, 1963.

ual life of the Church swept them all away, and quietly and majestically on to new quests and new triumphs. Church failure has invariably resulted from an attempt to check that spiritual movement which is independent of locality, and of all things material. Whenever the Church is governed from Jerusalem, or Rome, or from anywhere other than from Heaven, it is hindered and hampered and prevented from fulfilling the great function of its life.'

There is no doubt that the book of the 'Acts' is the record of an essentially *spiritual* movement,

but who will say that it is not practical. The truly spiritual is really practical and the rightly practical should be truly spiritual. These things should not be confused. But the adjustment and balance will only be found on Resurrection ground where the Cross has deeply touched our natural life, correcting its disorder, and establishing that true government of the Holy Spirit—the disposition of Christ.

Take *all* that James has to offer, but recognize that there is vastly more when "the power of his resurrection" is ever going deeper. The 'horizon' of resurrection is a very great one.

T. A-S.

### PRESSING ON FOR THE PRIZE

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

WHEN Paul was pressed into journeying over to Macedonia, he little realised what great spiritual values lay in the city of Philippi. For him it must have been a time of extreme bewilderment. There seemed no way open to him. The Spirit forbade him to speak the Word in Asia. When he made an attempt to move towards Bithynia, the same Spirit would not let him proceed. Everything must have appeared very negative, since the only guidance which came to him was 'No'. But God is never negative. He only checks and restrains when He has some better thing in view. This better thing had a close connection with Philippi.

When he finally received his guidance to move on, what a wonderful sphere was opened up to him! He not only moved into a new continent, he seems to have entered into a richer phase of spiritual ministry. Of all the churches which came into being as a result of this move, there was none to compare with that in Philippi, for the saints were as much a source of comfort and joy to the apostle as they must have been a real joy to the Lord. How often Paul must have thanked God for the previous disappointment. How glad he must have been that he could not, after all, go on into Asia. How thankful he must have felt, too, that he had heeded the Spirit. If he had brushed aside those Divine restraints and had pushed heedlessly on, he would have missed Philippi, which would have meant loss to himself, to them, to

the Lord and to us also. This gives us a background for our consideration of the supreme importance of "the prize". Many of our disappointments and apparent frustrations may be the Spirit's way of directing our attention to what is God's goal for us. This is of supreme concern to God, and should be to us also; it is here called "the prize".

### A SPIRITUAL MAN'S AMBITION

As we read this letter we get an impression of real confidence and intimacy between the writer and the readers. In such an atmosphere, the apostle is able to disclose his inmost thoughts and longings. These saints would not misunderstand him; indeed they would sympathize with his aspirations. Many of them would share this same desire, knowing something of its great importance. "Toward the goal", "unto the prize". One cannot but feel that when the letter was read to the assembled church, it must have clarified their vision, challenging every earthly and unworthy motive, and urging them onward and upward. They, too, were destined for this prize, and must bend all their spiritual energies to obtain it. What is this prize, which ought to be gained, but which—apparently—may be lost?

### WHAT THE PRIZE IS NOT

Perhaps it will help us if we consider firstly what the prize is not. Of course it is not salvation. That hardly needs to be stated. Paul was so assured of everlasting life that it mattered little to him whether he lived or died. Eternal life is not a prize to be striven for but a gift to be humbly and gratefully received. He had proved this. The

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

believers at Philippi had proved it too. They had "an evident token of . . . salvation, and that from God" (i. 28).

## PERSONAL POSITION

Nor could it have been connected with his own personal position or apostleship. He already had this position. He was one of the most outstanding preachers of the Gospel of his time, and of all time. He was the great apostle of the nations. How happy we would be if we could look back on such labours and successes as his! Whatever a man can become by Divine calling and by personal devotion, by prayer and suffering, by hard work and self-forgetfulness, all this he had already become. He knew this. The marvellous thing is that it did not puff him up, but rather made him even more humble. If this were the prize then he, at least, already had it. But he makes it very plain that the prize was not yet within his grasp. He still reached out eager hands to lay hold of it, still it lay before him as something attainable but not yet attained. So it is evident that when he wrote of a "prize" he was not thinking, as we often do, of a coveted position of prominence or advancement. It was something other than that.

## PERSONAL POSSESSIONS

Neither was it concerned with possessions or even blessings which he wished to obtain. He confessed that in his early life he had been an ambitious man, grasping for the best of everything. Even as a young man he probably possessed far more than most people ever expect to have. All this he relinquished for love of Christ. He had found other riches. But we must not imagine that his ambition and desire to possess had merely been transferred from earthly things to spiritual things, or that he was any longer seeking satisfaction from any thought of selfish gain, even of spiritual things. Such an attitude would be the very opposite of the "mind of Christ" about which he had just been writing. Those who are becoming self-centred in spiritual things, motivated mainly by concern with the blessings which they themselves receive, are certainly not pursuing the prize. We can be truly grateful for every gift which the Lord is kind enough to bestow upon us, but should be equally grateful for His withholding or removing, since true blessing is not a matter of acquisition.

## SUCCESSFUL SERVICE

When Paul wrote these words he was nearing the end of his ministry. It seems impossible to do credit to the fruitfulness and value of his service to God. Truly God had wrought wonders through him, using him in a remarkable way both to sinners and saints. We would be grateful to have achieved one-hundredth part of what he did, and would count ourselves to have reached the goal of all our desires and prayers if we had done so. Undoubtedly most of Paul's active service was over when he wrote these words, and clearly it had been service of such outstanding success that he could desire no more. Yet there was still a 'prize' which he had not yet obtained. Service had never been his goal. It should never be ours. Indeed it is in this realm that many snares are laid for the unwary. It is right to use all the gifts which the Lord has given us, and it is surely right to enjoy using them, but successful ministry must never be the governing motive of our life. If we are set aside from active work we should still be pressing on to the goal. When the time of active work is drawing to a close—as it seemed to be with Paul—then we should still have in view a prize which urges us onward and ever onward. We should be in active service as we are pursuing the heavenly prize, but we must never let that service take the place of the prize. When service has ended there is still the prize to be gained.

If, then, the things we have mentioned—position, possessions, success in service—are not the prize in view, then we must search again in this letter to discover what is the true aim and goal of the Christian.

## THE LORD'S SATISFACTION

In the first place, we must realise that the prize is not a human idea at all. It originated with the Lord. Paul called it "that for which I was apprehended by Christ Jesus". When the Lord acted from Heaven, stretching out His hand to arrest Saul of Tarsus, He knew very well what He wanted him for. So far as Christ was concerned, there was a definite goal in view. At first Saul may have imagined that this Divine purpose was limited to his work as an evangelist or teacher of the Word. It is true that he was called to work for the Lord, and indeed that for him there was a specially important ministry. It must have been a joy to the apostle to know that he had been able to work so hard for the Lord, and he knew

MARCH — APRIL, 1963.

that this joy was shared by his Lord whom he had served. He knew, however, that the Lord was not yet satisfied, at least not fully so. This, then, was a main feature of the goal, it was bound up with the Lord's own satisfaction.

If the prize mattered to Paul, it mattered far more to the Lord who had called him to possess it. Christ Himself has prayed for His people, and in His prayer passed beyond our life and activities here on earth, looking forward to the great eternal climax when He asked: "Father, those whom thou gavest me, I will that, where I am, they also may be with me . . ." (John xvii. 24). His last message to the churches amplified this destiny in the words: "He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne" (Rev. iii. 21). Nothing less than this will satisfy the heart of Christ. This is His goal for us.

### THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST

In saying "As I also overcame", the Lord Jesus indicated that He Himself is the great example and pioneer of this forward movement towards the prize. Philippians ii. 5-11 emphasizes this point. The verses describe how the Man Christ Jesus reached the spiritual goal which had been set before Him, and how in doing so He brought satisfaction to the Father's heart, for God's glory is but an outshining of God's satisfaction.

This description of the course which Christ took, of His self-emptying, His humbling and His obedience, to be followed by His exaltation, is given not merely for our admiration but as a goal which is set before us also. We are called to share Christ's glory, which means that by His grace we, too, are to bring satisfaction to the heart of the Father. We can only do this by being like Christ.

All that the Lord Jesus did while here on earth, and all the service which He gives from His exalted place in the glory was not just so much service done, but the outflow of His character, the expression of the kind of person that He is, His mind was fixed on the supreme prize of bringing glory to the Father. This mind led Him not to seek a position, but to let it go; not to acquire possessions, but to empty Himself of them; not only to take the form of a servant but also to carry through the matter of humble obedience to the extreme limit of the Cross.

This spirit is so in harmony with the Father's own nature, that it has assured for the Son the place of supreme authority at the heart and centre of all God's eternal and universal kingdom. He has sat down with the Father in His throne. Yet He is not intended to be there alone. For Him the 'prize' is that we may be there with Him. He died upon the Cross to make it possible for there to be a people of the same spirit with Himself who could therefore share His destiny.

Paul knew that this was the Church's calling. It was his own personal calling. So he found grace to follow Christ and to accept the way of the Cross. The prize of the calling on high to the Throne is only to be obtained by fellowship with the crucified Lord. It is the outcome of an inward conformity of character to Christ.

### THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST

Paul willingly let go of all that he would otherwise have valued in order to pursue this supreme end of conformity to Christ. "Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord . . ." (Phil. i. 3, 8).

Such 'knowledge' of Christ must mean something more than knowing about Christ. You do not have to pay the price which the apostle paid—and others have paid since—to get information about Christ. That can be done by enquiry and study. The true knowledge is to "gain Christ", that is to know the inward experience of what it means to be poured out in loving devotion to the Father, to enter into the fellowship of Christ's sufferings and to be conformed to His death. On this basis, and with the resurrection-life which it brings, a man moves on towards the goal. The Throne is not a reward for Bible knowledge, nor is it given just for intensity and earnestness in Christian service. It is God's goal for a kind of life, a life which has become conformed to the very character of His Son. Such men—Christlike men in truth—are the only ones who can bring deep satisfaction to the heart of God.

For us there can surely be no greater prize than this, really to bring satisfaction to the Father's heart. We are not left in any doubt as to the 'mind' which is necessary for this to be done, for it is the mind which was in Christ Jesus, the mind which led Him into a life of utter abandonment to the will of the Father, at any cost and through every trial and test. Paul made it clear that he sought to accept the same course, with all the im-



## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

plications of fellowship with the Crucified, knowing that only so could God be fully satisfied with his redeemed life. The challenge comes to us also to be 'thus minded', for only so can the great eternal desire for a reigning humanity be realised. The prize is to be like Christ; the destiny for such is the calling upward to the Throne.

## IMPORTANCE OF THIS SPIRIT TO OTHERS

There was nothing of rivalry or criticism of others in the apostle's expressed determination to press on to this goal. It is true that he implied that he would not be restrained by others. Whatever they did, or failed to do, he intended to press on, for the issue was too important for him to take undue notice of other people's ideas or opinions. Yet he had no desire to be alone in this, nor to outrun others. His greatest wish was to be a help to others, so that they might share with him the race and the prize.

We must make it our sincere desire, not only to press on ourselves, but that others should press

on too. One of the great differences between this and other prizes is that we do not have to force others back in order to get on ourselves. There is no advantage in getting ahead of others; in fact it is part of our advantage that they should press on with us. Our greatest progress is made when we are forgetting ourselves in true concern for our brothers and sisters in Christ, whoever they are and however they treat us.

If we truly press on, we become a testimony to the Lord's people concerning this great goal which is set before them. It is useless to have a mere teaching about overcoming or the Christian's vocation. People need not to be given the information but to meet the reality in the lives of those who are themselves pressing on to the prize. So in a sense, this was Paul's greatest ministry and his greatest helpfulness to his fellow-believers—himself to be a man pressing onward and upward to the goal. Far from being a selfish matter, or an alternative to spiritual service, this is the very heart and essence of all true ministry, to reach out for the prize, by way of the Cross.

H. F.

## THE STEWARDSHIP OF THE MYSTERY

## CHAPTER FIVE

NOTE. *The object of these messages is to show :—*

1. *That, in the eternal counsels of the Godhead, there has been from eternity past, a design, or what is called "The Eternal Purpose". This is what the Apostle Paul in particular calls "The Mystery"; that is—God's secret.*

2. *That this "Purpose" or "Mystery" was deliberately hidden by God during past ages, although implicit in Old Testament history and writings. These things Prophets sensed, desired to know, but did not understand (as see I Peter i. 10 - 12).*

3. *That we are now living in the dispensation in which this "Mystery" has been disclosed, revealed, and proclaimed; and it is this which gives to this dispensation its supreme meaning and importance.*

4. *That, while all Holy Spirit ministry bears definitely upon and is related to this "Eternal Purpose", a special "Stewardship" of the "Mystery" was entrusted to the Apostle Paul both in nature and measure, and that it is this "Stewardship" which explains him in the sovereign choice of God,*

*in his peculiar apprehending, and his deep spiritual history.*

5. *That around and against the knowledge of and entering into the meaning of this "Mystery" or "Purpose" the full force of the evil powers are most positively and relentlessly set.*

6. *That the Church as the Body of Christ was—in those eternal counsels—chosen and fore-ordained to be the vessel in which and through which the "Purpose" should be displayed; this "PURPOSE" being the explanation of "Foreknowledge", "Predestination", "Fore-ordination".*

7. *That "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation" prayed for for believers particularly connects with and relates to the knowledge of this "Eternal Purpose" or the understanding of the "Mystery"—God's disclosed secret. This is the supreme ministry of the Holy Spirit.*

8. *That the knowledge, apprehension, and understanding of this "Revelation" will determine the measure of significance, power, and effectiveness of believers, and give vital meaning to the corporate life of the Lord's people. But, as we have been trying to show, it is not a mental appre-*

*hension of the great truth, but the illumination of the heart; "the eyes of your heart being enlightened". It is too tragically and pathetically true, both in the New Testament and up to date that many who have received a wealth of teaching and have declared themselves as having believed it, can subsequently lay it aside and part with it quite cheaply. "All they in Asia be turned from me", said the Apostle, after having given Asia his fullest and his best.*

AS we proceed to the next step in our consideration we would say that the synopsis given above must be the essential content of all that has preceded and all that follows, and that nothing should be taken out of that context.

We are going to look at the "Mystery" or Divine Purpose as embodied in some of the New Testament books.

Firstly, a general word. It is the custom now to take a book of the Bible and break it up into its parts with a view to obtaining its particular lines of teaching. We owe a great debt to the Bible teachers who have provided us with the 'content' of the books by analysis, synthesis, outline, and design: by telescopic and microscopic delineation and commentary. By this means the particular doctrinal emphasis and characteristic of each book is underlined.

For instance, 'Romans' is the treatise on 'Justification by Faith'; or 'Galatians—'Our Liberty in Christ', and so on. This is undoubtedly profitable and good and we would not detract from it. But we beg to say that these methods and results may miss the most vital point.

Unless we recognize an inclusive and all-governing object we shall go no further than seeing these books as things in themselves; books apart, with their own separate content. Each will be different in itself and will just be this or that as to teaching.

The important thing in reading the New Testament books is to see that they are all tied together by one single object and that their diversity is only the diversity of the aspects or facets of one purpose. To see this it is both helpful and essential to ask a question as to each part or book. What does all that amount to? It will be what we can call the resultant reading. Sometimes we shall find that the writer does this very thing for us. Take for instance John chapter xx. In verses 30, 31, John summarizes all that he has put into the book. "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in

this book: but these 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." Thank you, John! Now we know exactly what it is all about. Not just so many incidents, however wonderful, but all the fragments are bound together by a single cord of purpose. In the same way we must read each book and then do more; we must see that all the books are tied together in the same way with a single object, with everything in them somehow bearing upon that object. That all-inclusive and single bond is undoubtedly "The Eternal Purpose" or what Paul calls "The Mystery", and each book is in some way a part of that. Keeping to Paul who, as we have said, is the supreme interpreter of "The Mystery", let us begin with

#### "THE MYSTERY" IN THE LETTER TO THE ROMANS.

It is of primary importance in taking up this letter that we turn immediately to the end to see if the writer does anything by way of summing up what he has written. We should expect him to do this after gathering so much into his document; and we are not wrong. Here it is: "Now to him that is able to stablish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal, but now is manifested, and by [through] the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, is made known unto all the nations unto obedience of faith; to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory for ever" (Rom. xvi. 25-27). (Every clause of this statement should be quietly considered.)

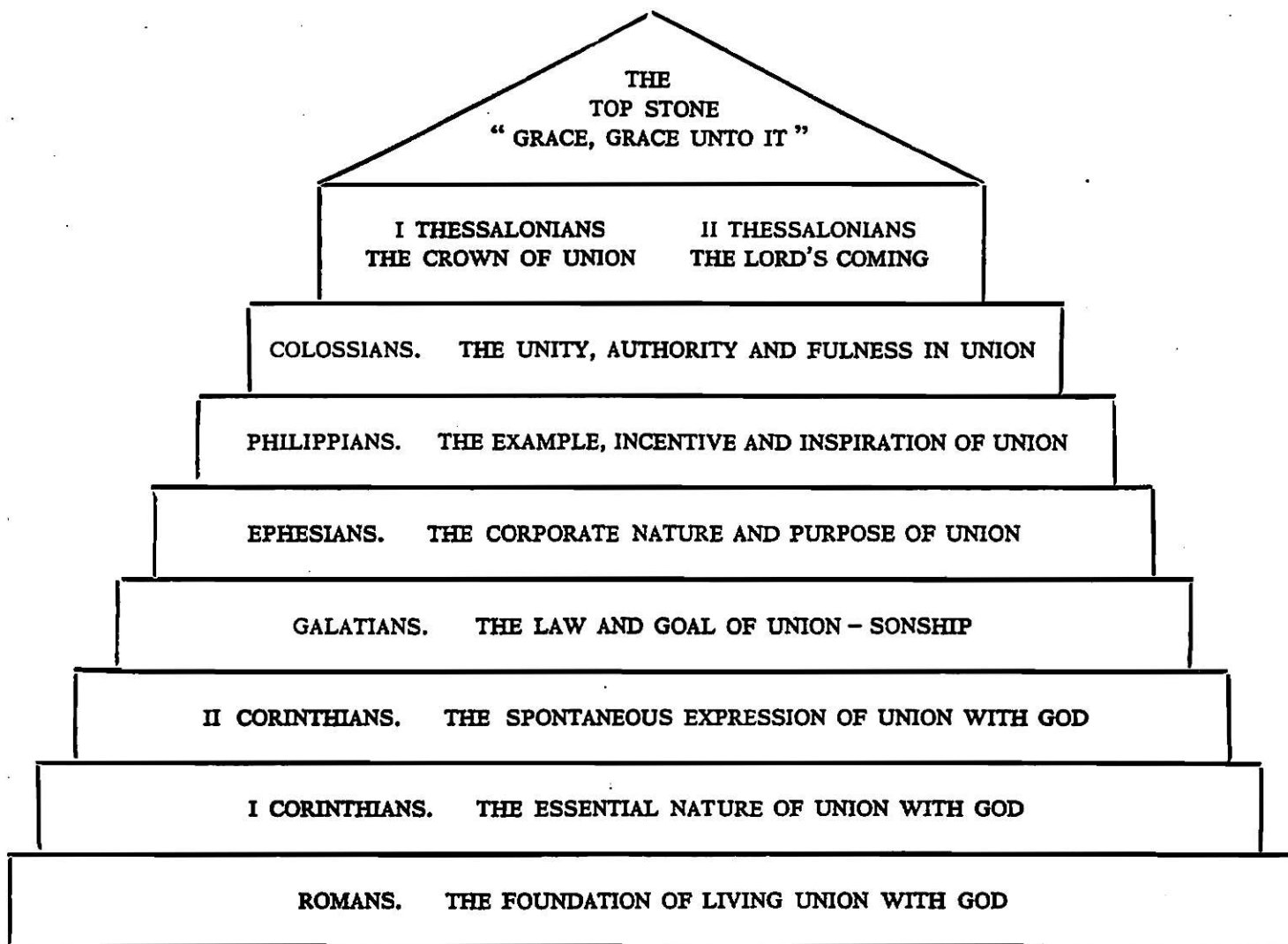
The point is that the Apostle gathers *all* that he has written in this letter into what he calls "the revelation of the mystery".

So then 'Romans' is more than a doctrinal treatise on "Justification by faith"; it is that, but in a larger context—the context of the "mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal".

In order to see how that is and what the connection really means we must here take space for an important parenthesis. We evangelicals believe that the Bible is God's book in a particular and unique way. We believe that He instigated it, that He is *in* it; that He is *over* it. We believe that He has governed it, protected, and preserved it. We believe many other things about it in its relation

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

THE PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENT OF GOD IN RELATION TO "ETERNAL PURPOSE" BY UNION WITH HIMSELF IN CHRIST



to God. One of these things is that it is not just an haphazard, chance, random, casual collection of writings, thrown together by the whim or notion of men without the sovereign overseeing of the Spirit of God. If we are right, and the evidences favour this belief, then the order in which we have the books—especially the New Testament books—is no accident or chance, but comes under that Divine government. We know how differently they would be arranged if chronology—the date factor—had decided. No one fails to see that the substance and *purpose* of 'Matthew' gives it the right to take first and foundational place in the collection, although not chronologically first. In the

same way, no one questions the right position of the 'Revelation' as the last and summation of all. And so it is with the whole received arrangement. A glance at the diagram of Paul's letters will show this 'natural' spiritual sequence.

Having put in that parenthesis, we can proceed to consider 'Romans' in the light of its immense context.

Our procedure will have to be to push aside a mass of the content of this letter, for the time being, bringing it back presently in relation to the supreme purpose. The historical and the doctrinal, can stand there just now and wait while we take note of the matter which governs all else. What is



MARCH — APRIL, 1963.

that? It is the place of God's Son. That is the key to every book, but it has a particular significance in each.

### THE PLACE OF GOD'S SON IN 'ROMANS'

The Apostle begins this letter with the phrase "... the gospel of God concerning his Son". Here are two things; the subject and the object. The subject is "the gospel of God". The object is "concerning his Son".

When the word "Gospel" is used nowadays, such as in the phrases: 'preaching the Gospel'; 'Gospel preaching'; 'taking the Gospel'; etc., the idea is almost invariably that of the evangel in its elementary form of the salvation of the unsaved. It is, in the mind of those so speaking, synonymous with 'Evangelism'; it is related to the basic and simple grounds upon which men are to be saved and enter the Kingdom of God.

A very cursory glance at the way in which it is used in the letters of the New Testament (for instance the ten occurrences in 'Romans'), will show how completely inadequate such a conception is. All the vast, profound and rich teaching, the fullest and the most 'advanced', is termed "The Gospel", as well as the simplest. Take I Corinthians xv, for instance. The question that forces itself upon one reading that part of the letter is, 'How did Paul ever get to know that?' But note; Paul calls that, "The *gospel* which I preached unto you."

"The "Gospel of God" is an immense thing, comprehending *all* revelation related to eternal counsels; to man in the eternal intention of God; to his creation, destiny, deflection, redemption, perfection, glory, and eternal vocation; and much more. This is *all* called "the gospel of God". Then note; it is said to be all "concerning his Son". The Son of God, Jesus Christ, is installed as the sum, the centre, and the object of all this "Gospel". How great He is! and how great a thing is the "Gospel"! In these eternal counsels, God's Son was designated, determined, and instated as the object and sphere of all the majestic, glorious, beneficent, and profound intentions of the Father. All this, because of its favourable intention is called, "the good news of God concerning his Son"; "the everlasting good news [gospel]".

The Bible is full of the greatest questions and most difficult problems that have ever confronted men, and the philosophers of all ages have spent all their energies in trying to answer them. Man is the centre of them all. There is that inborn and

ever-assertive sense that he was made for something more than just to be an animate creature to exist for a fleeting moment and then be extinguished for ever. It is what is called 'an inborn sense of destiny'. The question arising in that connection is, 'What *was* he intended for? What is the meaning of that strong sense? How shall man realise his destiny, and what is it that he is intended to be?'

Then there is the problem of man's sense of sin; a sense to kill which—if that can really be done—calls for his most positive, vehement, and persistent effort. This sense that he is not now what he ought to be, that there is a deep and troublesome wrong, is in his very being. Every conceivable expedient has been resorted to in order to get this constitutional moral disorder put right, and all the religions of the world; all the psychological sublimations or deceptions; all the excesses of abandon to diversions; all this, we say, and much more, is in order to subjugate this—recognized or unrecognized—cry of conscience for adjustment. How shall man find inward peace, rest, and inward articulation? These are but the beginnings of the deep questions and problems which are a part of the very being of the sentient self-conscious, and—if he only knew it—God-conscious being called "Man".

To the above we may add three other problems in this universe. There is the problem of the groaning creation: "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain . . . waiting". But so it has been for thousands of years, and the cries become louder and more anguished as time goes on. It cannot "bring forth"; there is a deep frustration, and as to its hopes and longings, its efforts are abortive and cursed with "vanity". 'Oh, for full and final release from this bondage of corruption and death!' is its cry. But its heart is sick with disappointed hope.

Then, all too evident and persistent, there is schism in this universe. Division follows division; conflict follows conflict. With every effort to secure unity and oneness there is more disruption. In every realm this warfare of factions grows, intensifies, and multiplies. Nothing escapes this invasion of suspicions, mistrust, fear, slander, and misrepresentation.

Finally, there is that deepest of all problems, the problem of the sinister, hostile, evil, and all-good-opposing power of an intelligent hierarchy of wickedness operating behind all these conditions; the "Evil One" and his minions maintaining this spiritual and temporal disorder and chaos.

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

God knew from eternity that all these problems would arise and these questions hang over His creation demanding a solution and an answer. He *had* the Answer, but, for reasons best known to Himself, He hid that Answer and kept that Secret, appointing a time when He would bring it out and make it known, and in so doing provide the way to rest and realisation.

Those who know this Letter to the Romans recognize that the things that we have tabulated are the things with which it deals, and that the answer of God, His Secret, His Mystery, is His Son, in whom and by whom all the problems are resolved and initially and ultimately settled.

The "Mystery" or "Secret" is not a treatise, a doctrine, a philosophy; not even 'Justification by faith', but a Person—that Person in Himself, in His work, in His death, resurrection, and exaltation is God's eternal Secret.

This is comprehensive because 'Romans' as foundational is comprehensive. It touches all these aspects, lays its hand most firmly—as we would expect—upon the first things: Sin and Righteousness; but comprehends *all* in "his Son"—"the gospel of God concerning his Son".

Other aspects are dealt with more specifically in following letters, i.e., so far as the arrangement is concerned.

T. A-S.

*(To be continued)*

## FOR BOYS AND GIRLS WHEN BROTHERS AGREE

**J**AMES and Gerald had always enjoyed their Summer holidays, but they had never before been allowed to choose where the family should go. It was always their parents who decided and made all the plans; then the family went off, with the two boys happy enough to go where they were taken.

This year, though, it was to be different, for the boys were beginning to grow up, at least they thought so, and they felt that it was time that they made the decision. They voiced this thought to their father one day, and asked that they might choose the holiday spot. He thought about it for a while; then he said to them, "Well, if you can agree as to where we should go, your mother and I will do as you wish, and I will take you there".

James and Gerald were brothers, and they usually got on well together, but in some ways they were very different. This difference soon became clear when they started to talk about what they should ask their father to do.

"Snowdonia", announced James, who was very keen to do some climbing, "Yes, that is the place for us. Snowdonia this year." Gerald did not like climbing very much but he was very fond of swimming, so he argued that they should go to the coast, and thinking that Cornwall ought to provide plenty of sunshine as well as bathing, his advice was that they should forget all about Wales and decide on Cornwall. He had some strong arguments about the possible weather in Wales too.

Now James was not selfish, at least he did not

mean to be, but he could not see Gerald's point. He felt sure that Father would much rather go to Snowdonia and he argued that probably Mother would prefer that too. So he had no intention of changing his mind, and insisted that they could do without the sea for once. They were always going to the coast.

So the argument grew hotter and hotter. Gerald felt sure that he was right, and that James was mistaken about his parents' wishes, so for him Cornwall became the only possible place. James, however, was quite certain that he was right, and that his was the best idea, so he could never change it for Gerald's. The talk went on late into the night.

Next morning, Gerald got downstairs early in order to talk first to his father, and to put forward his case for a seaside holiday. In the night he had thought of some new reasons besides those given to James; all these he brought to his father, arguing and pleading to such an extent that Father seemed quite convinced. At least he kept murmuring "Yes"; "Quite so".

"Well, Father", said Gerald at last, thinking that he was to have his own way, "I can see that you agree with me, so Cornwall it will be". His father did not say "Yes" this time, but instead he asked a question: "What does James say?" "Well", confessed Gerald, "James has another idea, but we need not bother about that. If you agree with me we can decide at once and you can get busy with the arrangements for Cornwall". "I

MARCH — APRIL, 1963.

will do whatever you ask”, his father answered, “and indeed I have promised that I will, but the one condition is that you two must agree in what you ask. Until you do that, I can take no action. It is not a question of getting me to agree with you, but of you two agreeing together. When you do that, I will do the rest.”

Later on in the morning James found his father alone, and he too began to talk about the holiday. He gave all the reasons which had caused him to choose Snowdonia, trying hard to get his father’s consent. However he only received the same answer. “But Father”, he protested, “you know that you and Mother like climbing best. You surely must agree with me.” He only received the same answer, “It is not a case of my agreeing with you, my son, but of the two of you agreeing together. That is what I am waiting for.”

Here was a problem for the two boys. It ought not to be difficult for brothers to agree. Each of them thought that it would be quite easy, if only the other would give way and agree with him. They talked and argued, each trying to influence the other, but without any success. When Father asked what he was to arrange, they still had to confess that they were not in agreement. “It is a matter of will power”, said dogged James, the one who wanted to climb, “we shall have to see who can hold out the longest and force the other to agree with him. That is the only way in which we can ever ask for the same thing.”

Until this Mother had said nothing, but now she drew the two boys aside and began to talk to them. “There is another way, you know”, she said. “It does not have to be a battle of wills in which each tries to force the other to agree with him. I wish you would take the other way, for it makes your father sad to see his two sons at loggerheads.” When they asked her what was the other way, she refused to tell them, urging them to think it out.

The next day was Sunday, and at the Morning Service there was a message on Matthew 18. 19, “If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven”. Among

other things, the Speaker pointed out that this did not mean that only people who had the same ideas could pray together. Nor did it mean that one must make the other yield to his wishes or way of thinking before their prayer would be in unison. He said that what it really meant was that if No. 1 stopped asking for what he thought was right, and No. 2 also stopped pressing his ideas, then they could both ask God to choose and decide. In this way, by yielding to Him, theirs could be a truly united prayer and would be sure of an answer.

The Preacher was their uncle—Mother’s brother—but whether he knew of their matter or not, the two boys never discovered. But they saw the point. So they went that afternoon to their father and told him that at last they were fully agreed. “Are you sure?” he asked, only to be told that yes, they were quite sure. “Then where is it to be?” asked Father, “Cornwall or Snowdonia?” It was James—the dogged one—who spoke for both of them. “We agree that we want you to choose, Father”, he said. “We only want to go where you decide, and are quite content to leave it to you.”

This was really the best thing, for Father had a legacy that year and was able to afford to go to Switzerland. This was something they had not thought of asking, for they had never been able to go abroad before. So Switzerland it was. “Much better than Snowdonia”, declared James, while Gerald had such wonderful bathing in the lakes, that he almost forgot that there was such a thing as the sea. Father’s choice was best. The only way to prove that, as well as to find agreement between themselves was to leave the choice to him.

The text which they heard is a good one for all of us, too, not only for decisions like theirs, but for every problem. No two people will ever agree in the sense which the Bible means, if one tries to make the other agree with him. Even the most diverse Christians, though, can find true agreement if they leave their own ideas and commit the matter to the Lord for Him to choose. That is when brothers agree.

H. F.



## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

## LEADERSHIP

## CHAPTER THREE

*(Continued)*

## JOSHUA

HAVING summarized the general ground of leadership as represented by Joshua, there remains one specific and inclusive factor which is given peculiar prominence and emphasis at the beginning of the book which bears his name. It is

## THE VITAL FACTOR OF COURAGE

If the first chapters of that book are the preparation for all that follows, or the foundation thereof, then, quite clearly courage is the dominant characteristic.

Four times in the brief first chapter is this note strongly struck: three times by the Lord, and once by the people. Courage is made a command and a demand. "Be strong and of a good courage" is the Divine command and requisite.

We have already shown the great context of this leadership; the context of specific vocation. It was the context of

## THE COMPLEMENT OF REDEMPTION.

There had been the great 'Out'. Now there was to be the great 'In'. There had been the tremendous *fact* of redemption. Now there was to be the *purpose* of it.

In a sense, so far it had been the negative, the great 'No'. Now it was to be the immense positive, the emphatic 'Yes'. As in electric light or power there has to be the negative and the positive, so these two—No and Yes, fact and purpose—complete the cycle.

If the 'Out' had made immense demands for courage in the case of Moses, the 'In' was going to make equal, if not greater, demands in the case of Joshua.

Every value to be secured and every step of advance toward fulness was going to be fraught with powerful and relentless resistance. The issue was no less than absolute dominion, and for this no quarter could be given by either side.

The salvation of the Church *from* the power of Satan's dominion is a costly and withstood matter. But the collective forces of his kingdom are stirred

to any and every kind of resistance when it comes to a growing and additional apprehension of Christ and a larger measure of Himself in possession of His people.

Not only the frontal attack or withstanding, but the paralysing insinuating of his own character in the form of covetousness, as at Ai; or the deceptiveness of compromise, as with the Gibeonites, are very effective methods. Let it be clearly recognized that the effect of the second of these—with a very long crippling carry-over—was to take the *fight* out of the Lord's people. It is a subtly effective manoeuvre of the enemy to make the Church accept a compromise without the need for battle.

So there was always the temptation to accept an untimely and too-early settlement and satisfaction. This, in the case of Israel, resulted in the *terrible* period of the 'Judges', the disgrace of the Bible.

Discouragement, impatience, and weariness were ever near to rob of fulness and finality.

All this was in the knowledge of God when He laid such emphasis upon courage at the beginning.

We could say that perhaps the greatest weapon of the foe of spiritual progress and fulness is *discouragement*, and he well knows the menace to his interests of spiritual courage. We need not stay to do more than remark that spiritual courage is a peculiar kind of courage, and of a higher order than physical or even moral courage. The courage of Jesus when on trial—the courage to be silent—was more powerful than any other kind of courage. The courage of the Apostles on and after the Day of Pentecost was a victory over their own former cowardice and something that was above the natural. To meet the ultimate spiritual forces of this universe requires more than the best natural courage. The best human courage is no match for the Devil and his hosts, with their almost boundless resources of subtlety, malice, guile, cunning, strength, and tireless energy. Only, as with Joshua, a knowledge of the "Captain of the hosts of the Lord" as being in charge, though unseen, will nerve the spirit of those in *this* battle.

That function of spiritual leadership to keep vision ever in view and to inspire to its attainment is in itself a battle with disappointment and des-

MARCH — APRIL, 1963.

pair. The leader has to infect others, like Joshua, through intermediaries, and be a constant inspiration to those in the battle. When he himself is fighting a fierce battle with heartbreak he has to 'anoint his face, and go before the people as at other times', not bring his own personal suffering upon them so that they are weakened. This is a very real aspect of spiritual courage. The leader has to get his courage at first hand from God, and this means many a secret courageous battle with depression. His temptation is very often and fierce to lower his standard, to lessen his demands, to modify his expectations, and to accommodate the situation so that it is not so exacting but easier for every one.

In a thousand ways and in ever-recurring demands, courage is called for as the only way through.

But even the reminder of this may discourage unless we see the other side. So we have to take account of

### THE INCENTIVES OF COURAGE.

The first of these is

#### THE UNCHANGING PURPOSE OF GOD.

It was long long before the time of Joshua that God had made known the intention with which Joshua was now confronted. If God *could* have been discouraged and made to abandon His purpose, He had had more than enough to bring that about. Right here at the threshold of the Land was the cemetery of a generation which had failed Him. But—in that instance alone—if it meant the sacrifice of a whole generation God will go on with another, and the link will be the courage of Joshua and Caleb. What we have just said has an immense amount of history wrapped up in it. (Our book *God's Reactions to Man's Defections* is an enlargement of this matter.) How often the Lord has had to say regarding His purpose, 'I meant it to be with this people in this place, and I made a beginning which was in much life, but I am being limited by them, they want an easier way. I cannot go beyond the measure they give Me, so I must move on and carry it further with others and elsewhere.' The Book of the Revelation is the summation and the consummation of these Divine reactions and it sees victory and realisation at last, with every faithful remnant present.

This means that, although at many times and with many means it looks as though God was defeated and frustrated by the imposed limitations

of those concerned, He has never abandoned His purpose but is going on.

Forty years were a seeming vacuum in Divine purpose, but a new generation was being prepared, and Joshua's courage was vindicated therein.

This persistent, unchanging and unrelenting purpose of God has to be a great en-courage-ment if once the vision has been caught, although many a set-back has been suffered.

A second incentive is that

#### THE END IS ALREADY SECURED.

To Joshua, before a blow was struck or a step was taken, the Lord's word was, "I *have* given". While there were conditions of possession as to Joshua and the people, with God there were no chances or peradventures. The end is with Him because He *is* the end. The test of courage often comes when fierce and remorseless conflict rages around a situation or in relation to some new 'possessing', and it is far from easy to believe that this is something that *has* been given. Then courage means *holding on*, and there is nothing more to do.

Somehow, somewhere, some time, a truly committed people will know that God *reserved* the purpose unto them and that it was in His hands despite all the appearances to the contrary.

One other incentive, for the time being—

#### THE LORD'S PRESENCE.

"As I was . . . so I will be"; "the Lord thy God is with thee" (Joshua i. 5, 9).

Two conditions govern the presence of the Lord.

a. Being wholly committed to, and fully in line with, His purpose.

b. Being completely under the government of, and faithful to, His Word. (see chap. I).

Given these two things His presence is assured.

Joshua—because of the greatness of the commission—was given an experience of the Lord's presence in the "Captain of the hosts of the Lord", but henceforth he would not see but, like Moses, have to 'endure as seeing Him that is *invisible*'.

"The hosts of the Lord" *might* mean the Church militant, or the battling forces of Israel. But—additionally—it certainly means the *unseen* hosts at the Lord's command. They *were* seen by a Prophet. They are often referred to in Scripture. Jesus spoke of "twelve legions of angels" which could have come to His rescue on request. The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews speaks of them

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

as "ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation".

Perhaps we have greater resources by the presence of the Lord than we have realised or reckoned with.

One last word in connection with Joshua and his aspect of leadership.

This courage is a 'foot-by-foot' matter. "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon have I given thee."

It is a 'sole-of-your-foot' progress and process: not all at once; every step has to be consolidated. Every few inches—so to speak—have to be secured by conquest, and there will never be a patch that is not marked by courage.

But all this can be so abstract. What does it really mean in practice? It just means this. There are numerous situations and positions where the enemy has *his* feet, and which he is holding against Christ. It may be a strained or disrupted

relationship between two Christians. It may be something in the personal life; in a home situation; in the local assembly; or any one of a thousand things which just locks up those concerned. That ground has got to be taken from the Devil. It may necessitate a confession of wrong, a plea for forgiveness, a letting go to God and man. It may require a going back to where we went wrong and seeing if—in any way—the damage can be repaired. This is what it means to take ground from the Devil and to put there some feature of Christ, some aspect of grace: meekness for pride: kindness for hardness: love for bitterness: patience for impetuosity; in all—Christ for self. Every one of us must know what "the sole of your feet" means unto breaking the enemy's power and increasing the measure of Christ.

This calls for courage, and this is where and how courage will be tested.

T. A-S.

---

 PLEASE NOTE

By the time that this issue of *A Witness and a Testimony* is in your hands the Editor (Mr. Sparks) will probably be in the United States. All business matters relating to the paper and literature should be addressed as before to The EDITOR, 30 Dunoon Road, Forest Hill, London, S.E. 23. These will be attended to by Mr. SPARK'S secretary—Miss D. B. GUY. Only personal letters should be addressed to Mr. SPARKS, whose base address will be—until further notice:—

c/o Mr. Paul Stearns,  
Box 431,  
Port Washington,  
Long Island,  
New York.



MARCH — APRIL, 1963.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We acknowledge with gratitude the following gifts received during December 1962, and January 1963.

Abergavenny 10s., £1; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia £8 2s. 8d.; Airdrie 5s., £2; Amsterdam, Holland 10s.; Ashanti, Ghana 15s.; Ashbury £2 2s.; Babba-combe 10s.; Bangalore, India £3; Barking £1 10s.; Beckenham 10s.; Belfast £1, £1 12s.; Belingwe, Rhodesia £5; Bexhill 10s.; Birmingham 5s., 6s.; Bogota, Colombia £2; Bolton £1 6s. 8d.; Brighton £2; Bristol 5s.; Brynmawr £1; Burnley 5s.; Canterbury 7s. 6d.; Cardiff £1 7s. 4d.; Castle Bromwich £1; Chadderton £1; Chesham 10s. 6d.; Chicago, Illinois £1 15s.; Chorley Wood £1; Congleton £10; Crediton £1 10s.; Doncaster 4s.; Dublin £3; East Barnet 6s. 2d., 10s.; Eastbourne 8s. 8d., 16s.; Fareham 11s.; Farnborough 17s. 2d.; Findon 10s.; Frinton-on-Sea 2s. 6d.; Glasgow £5, 10s., £2; Hastings £1; Hereford 8s.; Hirwaun £1; Hounslow £2; Hull 8s. 6d., £1 10s.; Hunter's Quay £1; Ipswich 3s.; Ispringen, Germany £5; Johannesburg, South Africa £5; Leatherhead 13s. 6d.; Leigh-on-Sea 4s. 6d.; London, Canada £2 8s.; London, N.14—£1 Is., £4 1s. 6d.; N.W.9—£10; S.E.9—10s.; S.E.12—5s.; S.E.15—6s., 12s.; S.E.23—10s., 10s., £1, £1, £1, £5, £5; S.E.25—£1; S.W.4—£2; S.W.11—£1; W.1—£1; W.12—5s.; Louth £1 13s. 9d.; Lucknow, India £1; Maidstone 5s. 8d.; Manchester 5s.; Morecambe £1; Mount Merrion £5; Newcastle-on-Tyne 9s., 10s.; Newtown of Pitcairns £1; Normandy £1; Norwich £2; Perth £5; Peterborough, Canada £1; Pontypool

10s.; Ranchi, India £1; Richmond Hill, Canada £4 18s. 4d.; Romford 7s. 4d.; Rufforth £3; St. Gallen, Switzerland £1; St. Ursanne, Switzerland £1; Sandown 7s., £1; Singapore £2; Southampton 10s., 10s.; Southsea 10s.; South Shields 10s.; Steeton £2; Stirling 7s. 2d.; Stockholm, Sweden £2; Stuttgart, Germany £2 4s. 6d.; Sutton Coldfield £1 1s.; Tadworth £1 3s. 3d.; Toronto, Canada £1; Tunbridge Wells £1; Ventnor £1; Wakefield £5; West Wickham £5; Wigan £1; Worthing £2; Yarmouth, Canada £1; Zürich, Switzerland £1  
Total £190 8s. 2d.

Allentown, Pa. \$10; Bellflower, Calif. \$2; Birmingham, Ala. \$5, \$5, \$25; Boulder, Colo. \$1; Brooklyn, N.Y. \$5; Charlotte, N.C. \$4; Cincinnati, Ohio \$5; Collingswood, N.J. \$2, \$200; Copenhagen, Denmark \$1; Ewan, N.J. \$7; Ft. Worth, Texas \$7.30; Glendale, Calif. \$2; Granite City, Ill. \$10; Hagerstown, Md. \$2; Huntington Station, N.Y. \$10.50; Hutchinson, Kansas \$1; Indianapolis, Ind. \$2; Jacksonville, Fla. \$2; Kokomo, Ind. \$10; Lansdowne, Pa. \$5; Los Angeles, Calif. \$3; Monrovia, Calif. \$2; New York N.Y. \$2; Orlando, Fla. \$3; Ouango, C.A.R. \$2.20; Pasadena, Calif. \$5; Philadelphia, Pa. \$5, \$2; San Antonio, Texas \$4; Stonewall, Ga. \$1; Temple City, Calif. \$5  
Total \$358.00

Athens, Ont. C.\$2.00; Islington, Ont. C.\$25.00;  
Lillooet, B.C. C.\$25.00  
Total C.\$52.00  
Guntur, A.P. Rs. 10/-

## SPECIAL MEETINGS IN SWITZERLAND

### AESCHI, BERNESE OBERLAND

We are hoping, in the Lord's will, to have a further conference time at Aeschi this year. The dates are:—

*FRIDAY evening, 6th SEPTEMBER*

*MONDAY morning, 16th SEPTEMBER*

The ministry of the Word will be in English with interpretation, as necessary, into German and French. In view of the growing number of friends coming to these times each year, we feel that accommodation in the Hotel where the conference is

held should be reserved for those who are able to be with us for the whole period. Friends staying for a few days only will be accommodated in the village, as near as possible to the Hotel. In any case, accommodation is limited and an early application is advisable. Please apply to the following from whom any further details required may also be obtained:—

THE CONFERENCE SECRETARY,  
30, Dunoon Road,  
London, S.E. 23, England.

## WITNESS AND TESTIMONY LITERATURE

---

### By T. A-S.

GOD'S REACTIONS TO MAN'S DEFECTIONS . . . . .	7/- (\$1.50)
RIVERS OF LIVING WATER . . . . .	6/- (\$1.28)
PROPHETIC MINISTRY . . . . .	5/6 (\$1.18)
OUR WARFARE . . . . .	4/6 (\$0.96)
PIONEERS OF THE HEAVENLY WAY . . . . .	4/6 (\$0.96)
THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO PAUL . . . . .	4/6 (\$0.96)
WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CHRISTIAN . . . . .	4/6 (\$0.96)
FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE . . . . .	4/6 (\$0.96)
THE GOLD OF THE SANCTUARY . . . . .	4/- (\$0.85)
THE CENTRALITY AND UNIVERSALITY OF THE CROSS . . . . .	3/- (\$0.64)
WE BEHELD HIS GLORY (VOL. II) (cloth boards)	4/6 (\$0.96)
(Art paper covers)	3/6 (\$0.75)
THE BATTLE FOR LIFE . . . . .	2/6 (\$0.53)
GOD'S SPIRITUAL HOUSE . . . . .	1/6 (\$0.32)
THE WORK OF GOD AT THE END TIME . . . . .	1/6 (\$0.32)
HIS GREAT LOVE . . . . .	1/6 (\$0.32)
THE SCHOOL OF CHRIST . . . . .	1/6 (\$0.32)
UNION WITH CHRIST . . . . .	1/6 (\$0.32)
GOD HATH SPOKEN . . . . .	1/- (\$0.21)
THE ULTIMATE ISSUE OF THE UNIVERSE . . . . .	9d (\$0.16)
THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT . . . . .	6d (\$0.11)
THE WATCHWORD OF THE SON OF MAN . . . . .	4d (\$0.07)
BETHANY . . . . .	3d (\$0.05)
THE SUPREME VOCATION . . . . .	3d (\$0.05)
CHRIST—ALL, AND IN ALL . . . . .	3d (\$0.05)
CHRIST IN HEAVEN AND CHRIST WITHIN . . . . .	2d (\$0.04)
THE ARM OF THE LORD . . . . .	2d (\$0.04)
THE GOD OF THE AMEN } . . . . .	2d (\$0.04)
THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA } . . . . .	1/6 a dozen (\$0.32)
THE CROSS OF CHRIST (The Zero hour of the Creation) . . . . .	1d (\$0.02)

THINGS THAT DIFFER . . . . .	1d (\$0.02)
THE BATTLEGROUND OF THE SOUL . . . . .	1d (\$0.02)
A GOD THAT HIDETH HIMSELF . . . . .	1d (\$0.02)

### By G.P.

THE GOSPEL IN THE FARMYARD (For the Children, 110 pages. Illustrated) . . . . .	4/- (\$0.85)
GOSPEL MESSAGES FROM THE ANTARCTIC (For the Children 170 pages. Illustrated) . . . . .	5/- (\$1.07)

### By H.F.

THE CHURCH'S PRAYER AND SPIRITUAL INCREASE . . . . .	2d (\$0.04)
THE REALITY OF GOD'S HOUSE . . . . .	2d (\$0.04)
THE CHURCH AS GOD WANTS IT TO-DAY . . . . .	2d (\$0.04)
THE CHALLENGE OF THE IMPOSSIBLE { . . . . .	2d (\$0.04)
1/6 a dozen (\$0.32)	
READY FOR THE KING (For the Children, 48 pages. Illustrated) . . . . .	1/6 (\$0.32)
ON WINGS OF FAITH (For the Children, 52 pages. Illustrated) . . . . .	2/- (\$0.43)
BURIED TREASURE (For the Children, 48 pages. Illustrated) . . . . .	2/- (\$0.43)

### By A.I.K.

THIS IS THE VICTORY . . . . .	3d (\$0.05)
-------------------------------	-------------

### By T.L.M.

ENTERING INTO LIFE ( <i>The Way of Salvation</i> ) . . . . .	9d (\$0.16)
ESCAPE INTO CHRIST . . . . .	9d (\$0.16)

### By W.N.

SIT WALK STAND . . . . .	2/- (\$0.45)
An extract from THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE . . . . .	3d (\$0.05)

### By W.L.

A GOD WHO HIDES HIMSELF . . . . .	2d (\$0.04)
SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE (CONSECRATION) } . . . . .	2d (\$0.04)
1/6 a dozen (\$0.32)	



MAY — JUNE, 1963.

VOL. 41. No. 3.

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL	...	...	...	...	49	LEADERSHIP' (IV)	...	...	...	58
HORIZONED BY RESURRECTION ( <i>conclusion</i> )	...	...	...	...	52	FOR BOYS AND GIRLS	...	...	...	60
'GO IN THIS THY MIGHT'	...	...	...	...	53	"HERE AM I; SEND ME"	...	...	...	61
THE STEWARDSHIP OF THE MYSTERY (VI)	...	...	...	...	56	"THIS IS THE MESSAGE . . . FELLOWSHIP"	...	...	...	62
THE TRUE NATURE OF NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY	...	...	...	...	65					

EDITORIAL

THE SWING OF THE PENDULUM

If a pendulum clock is not true on its base the pendulum will swing too much to one side. This will upset its timekeeping, and those who are guided by it will be misled. There is much that spiritually corresponds to this, and in the Word of God there is a constant effort to keep the Lord's people true on their basis.

The Church is intended to be God's instrument for keeping life true. Too often its pendulum swings too much to one side or the other and its guidance becomes unreliable. This unbalanced condition relates to many things. In different ways and at different times the swing is in some exaggerated or extreme direction and an abnormal condition results.

As we have said, so much of the Word of God is concerned with either guarding against such loss of balance, or restoring it when it has been upset. Here we are going to touch upon one major aspect of this matter. Let us say immediately that anything which goes to extremes and loses its proportion means a serious loss to the Lord, and throws His people into confusion. This has been and is the result of

EXTREMES IN EXCLUSIVENESS OR INCLUSIVENESS

While it is true that each of these has often been a reaction from, or fear of, the other, such reaction is never a satisfactory solution, or a justifiable expedient. Excess in any direction is wrong, and what is wrong is dangerous.



## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

Let us first look at the evil of exclusiveness when it is carried too far. In the New Testament there is a very clear and strong appeal against this disposition. We see this in at least two connections. It was the incorrigible propensity of the Judaisers. They had their base in Jerusalem and their tentacles reached out to the ends of the earth. Like the arms of an octopus they spread out to strangle the life out of anything that they could fasten upon. Not merely did the Lord and Paul appeal against this life-destroying evil, but they thundered against it, and were never so vehement against anything else as they were against this.

It goes by various names, such as Legalism, Puritanism, Exclusivism, etc., but it is anything that is wholly and invariably negative without a balancing positive. Of course, there are differing degrees and various causes or characteristics, but, whatever the form it takes, it is one of the persistent enemies of life and of the fulness of Christ.

In the case of the Judaisers, exclusivism was a system, not just a tendency. You belonged or you did not belong. You were 'one of us', or you were an outsider and suspect. Prejudice was in the very roots and it instinctively ruled relationship.

But there was, in New Testament times, as there ever has been and is now, another aspect of this malady. It was one of the strongest elements in Corinth. As you know, the Apostle, in his letters, was dealing in the main with the 'natural man', that is, the 'soulical man'. A large element in this 'natural man'-complexion was natural selectiveness, preference, partiality, etc.; both in the preference for the type of man and in the kind of ministry. The eye was not on the Lord in the man, or looking for what he had to impart of the Lord, but upon the man himself; his manner, his ability, his personality, his 'line of teaching', and so on.

There were things about the Apostles personally which the Corinthians either preferred or resented and these things resulted in more-or-less-closed parties. It is tragic to note that this kind of thing brought them to the point of losing the values of the ministry of the great Apostle himself. Because of this he made his great and pathetic appeal in the words, "Be ye enlarged".

The classic and incomparable thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians took its rise and had its basis here in this very context. There is nothing larger in all the Bible. That this particular feature of exclusivism marked and marred the Corinthians and threatened both their spiritual fulness and their world-testimony becomes immediately evident by the very way in which the Apostle *opens* his letter, and we do well to ponder his words.

*"With all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, their Lord and ours"*.

The range and scope of benediction is "all", "in every place". Who? What?—Who hold our particular interpretation of truth? Who conduct their meetings as we do? How many such questions could be introduced here. But what is the denominator? It is "who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours". The basis of fellowship is thus determined as being the acknowledged, accepted, and declared Lordship of Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ as Lord uniting them and us. Well, so much regarding exclusiveness, for the time being.

What about excessive inclusivism? If it is dangerously possible to make Christ smaller than He really is, it is equally possible to make Him, not greater, but more inclusive than He is. We have only to read that First Letter to the Corinthians to see (if we will so study it), that there are more than a few things which have no place in Christ. These things, of course, are not just the moral, social, and pagan evils referred to; but are, again, the bringing in of the 'natural man' with his standards of wisdom, power, and success(?). Natural wisdom is particularly ruled out. Indeed, it is the whole system of this world's ways and standards which is vetoed.

If there is one thing that the Bible reveals as being hated by God more than another, it is mixture. There are two irreconcilable spiritual systems in this universe, the very natures of which are positively inimical and hostile to each other, emanating from two utterly contrary sources. The overlapping of these and their admixture, where what is of God is concerned, is Anathema to Him and He hates it.

MAY — JUNE, 1963.

It is with regard to this that the Apostle says in this letter that "the fire shall try . . ." The fire of God's wrathful judgment will expose and consume all mixture. Christians, the Church, and all which claims to be of God and for God will do well to examine all things in this light and ask just how much 'conforms to this age' and is according to this world? There is an inclusiveness everywhere which is sapping the very vitals and destroying the very effectiveness of Christianity.

The greatest plague and menace in the physical realm is cancer. What is the effect of cancer? When it gets a hold, it enlarges the organism out of all natural proportions, but as it does so, it destroys its particular and distinctive form so that the organism no longer looks like itself and loses its natural character. This is what has happened very largely to Christianity. There has been an invasion by this world which has enlarged it abnormally and at the same time robbed it of its distinctive character and function. God has always spoken along physical lines concerning spiritual conditions. Distinctiveness is something very vital to, and rightly characteristic of, the Body of Christ, but it should be that of the whole Body. Otherwise the Body will be thrown out of balance. If God has to raise up specific ministries in and to the Body, it is not with a view to making the Body unbalanced and bulgy, but because the Body has become deficient and indefinite. There is a difference between specific ministries *to* the whole Body and abnormal features *in* the Body.

If the whole Body were as God would have it, it would be outstandingly distinctive and pronounced. The fear of distinctiveness and a reaction from the specific may result in a very general, heterogeneous, nondescript, something-or-nothing mixture. This may be very 'happy' and free from conflict, but it has no impact and will not meet need in its deepest demand.

How clear it is that there has never been anything which God has raised up to lift His Church from the 'ordinary', nominal and very general level but that sooner or later a 'down-grade' element has come in which has made that thing quite general, broad, indistinct, and, if it goes on, it is with but a shadow of its original and former glory and effectiveness. There is a bigness which is disastrous to spiritual quality.

In order to recover a true and effective testimony the Lord has more than once had to put into effect His words, "I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord" (Zeph. iii. 12). This was first said in relation to an inclusiveness which had robbed of all distinctiveness.

So, for this present, we close by repeating our conviction that the two great needs of our time are, on the one hand, salvation from man-made fences around our Lord Jesus by which He is made smaller than He really is: and, on the other hand, the recovery and consolidation of the outstanding distinctiveness and unmistakableness of what is really Christ, without mixture.

Let us seek largeness of heart with proper discrimination: true distinctiveness without hardness, bigotry, superiority and spiritual pride. The Holy Spirit, when in full control, will always adjust contradictions and establish proportion and balance. This can be easily seen if we read our New Testament with the object of noting this feature of His leading and work.

Let us pray that we may really be set level as to our basis, and that our pendulum may swing evenly and equally; resulting in a true and safe testimony to all who are looking in our direction for guidance.

EDITOR

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

## HORIZONED BY RESURRECTION

### GOD'S ANSWER TO EVERY CHALLENGE

(concluded)

AS a matter of both interest and further instruction, we could follow our recent course and bring under consideration other typical characters to show what resurrection means in the totality of human categories. But we did not set out to study human life comprehensively. Our purpose was to try to show that, in Christ, a new humanity has been introduced in resurrection, and that Christ as such challenges *our* humanity and demands—and makes possible—adjustment to Himself; that is, conformity to His image.

Having illustrated this by such cases and categories as Mary Magdalene; the two disciples on the Emmaus Road; Simon Peter; James the Lord's brother: we proceed now to gather this whole matter into a final emphasis.

The first thing that the New Testament makes perfectly clear is

#### THE TRANSCENDENT POWER OF RESURRECTION.

Resurrection is the paramount miracle.

Death is the greatest power against God's work, God's likeness, God's purpose. Death is the greatest power in this universe against man; his labours, his hopes, his wellbeing. Death is the last word in the creation as it is. Outside of God there is no power in this universe as great as death. When it has intervened and done its work there is *nothing* that can reverse or destroy it. In the realm of evil there is no power that exceeds the power of death. This is why, in referring to the resurrection of Christ from the dead, the words are used: "the *exceeding* greatness of his power" (Eph. i. 19). When death has exceeded every other evil power—sin, suffering, sorrow, and destruction, then God's unique and exclusive answer is the only hope, and the one answer.

More importance and glory is placed upon resurrection in the New Testament than upon any other matter. Indeed, everything else is declared to be in vain and worthless until resurrection is established. Resurrection is stated to give the value to every testimony and every work. Death, spiritual death (not cessation of being)—of which the physical is only one small aspect—is Satan's hori-

zon. Resurrection is God's horizon *in Christ*.

Resurrection, we repeat, is the answer to death in all its forms and aspects: God's answer in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Having said that, let us proceed to note that the next thing revealed in the New Testament is that this supreme truth in Jesus Christ is the birthright of every one born into God's spiritual family; the heritage of every truly born-again child of God.

But the point for special realisation is that we must not make the mistake that Martha of Bethany made, when she received such a revealing correction. She said, concerning her brother: "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection." It is not something in the future for believers, but for the moment when they believe on the Lord Jesus and receive Him. The order now is first the resurrection of the human spirit and at last the resurrection body. This, for any born-anew Christian needs no stating, although the *meaning* may take years to learn. It will come up again in our next series on 'Horizons'.

What immediately arises out of this fact is that, while resurrection is a spiritual crisis and experience,

#### RESURRECTION IS A GROWING EXPERIENCE.

The history and experience both of the Church and individuals as in the New Testament is a revelation and manifestation of what Paul calls "the power of his resurrection". Again and again, and in ever-deeper and fuller ways situations arose in which the issues were nothing less than an end or a new beginning; death or new life. This is a *fact*, but there are one or two things to note in this connection.

The reason is found in a repeated word—'That': "Always bearing about in the body the dying [the putting to death] of the Lord Jesus, THAT the life also of Jesus might be manifested in our mortal flesh" (II Cor. iv. 10); "We had the sentence of death within ourselves, THAT we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead" (II Cor. i. 9); "For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake.



MAY — JUNE, 1963.

THAT the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh" (II Cor. iv. 11).

The great fact is that the Church and individual believers are intended to be the vessels of "the testimony of Jesus", and "the testimony of Jesus" is that God raised Christ from the dead and He lives by an indestructible life. Whatever and whoever has Christ within it or them cannot die. There may be allowed many assaults of death; many deep and dark experiences; but resurrection is God's answer to faith every time.

There is another factor to be recognized. Death is an agent in God's hands. When Jesus died He bore away a whole condemned order. Death nullified what could not stand with God. Although He died atoningly and vicariously, and we do not ex-

tend that, yet, the principle remains that every fresh *experience* and working of "the dying of Jesus" is intended to remove something in order to make still more room for Christ risen. The outcome should be both a new knowing of the *power* of His resurrection, and a clearer and *fuller* place for Himself. Thus, the experience on both its sides is necessary. In the final issue all corruption will have been removed, and Christ will be all in all.

The first picture in the Bible is of resurrection as to the creation. The last picture is that of resurrection consummated.

So we are right in saying that

IN CHRIST ALL THINGS ARE HORIZONED BY  
RESURRECTION.

T. A-S.

## "GO IN THIS THY MIGHT"

*"Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, Let Baal contend against him, because he hath broken down his altar. Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east assembled themselves together; and they passed over, and encamped in the valley of Jezreel. But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon; and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered together after him" (Judges vi. 32 - 34).*

TO some of us the command 'Go' may come as a definite urge from the Lord that we should move forward into some new sphere. For most of us it rather reminds us of the fact that just where we are now is the place of the Lord's commission and the Lord's will. The emphasis is not on movement; but on proving the power of God, in spite of adverse circumstances and personal inadequacy.

Nobody was more surprised than Gideon to hear himself addressed in this way: "Go in this thy might . . ." He was clearly unaware of the fact that he had any might in which to go. And of course it is true that in himself he had none. This is in keeping with the other personalities which emerged in those long years of Israel's weakness and confusion. The judges, who were so greatly used of God in their day, were people who suffered from very severe handicaps. They were weak in themselves, like Gideon. They were despised by their fellows, like Jephtha. They were ignoble, like Samson. Like the Corinthians, they were the "foolish", the "weak", the "base" and the

"despised"; they were the "things which are not . . ." whom God has chosen (I Cor. i. 27, 28).

Notice the word 'chosen'. It was not chance that God had no better instruments. He is not described as making the best of poor material because there was nothing else. He needed people like that. In Gideon's case it is made very clear that the condition for Divine power was human weakness. God found him weak, and kept him weak. Yet at the same time He told him to go in his might. The rest of the story demonstrates how great and how effective this might proved to be. The man who knows that he is without strength; the man who has the strength which he saw coming to him taken away, this is the man whom God can use. It is not our purpose to enter into the story in detail, but only to emphasize the conjunctions at the beginning of the three verses quoted above: "Therefore", "Then", and "But".

### "THEREFORE"

The first word, "Therefore", refers to Gideon's breaking down of Baal's altar. When God tells us to venture out in faith, there is often some practical matter which must be dealt with, something to be done or refrained from which will show the reality of our new faith. "Go in this thy might" the Lord had commanded Gideon and then that same night He told Gideon to throw down his father's altar to Baal. This was the condition to blessing; if you like, the price to be paid for the Spirit's power and victory. In all probability it was the

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

most difficult action which Gideon ever performed, for God has a way of confronting us with a major test right at the very beginning of our service for Him.

Two altars are referred to in this chapter. There was Gideon's altar to the Lord, which he called "Jehovah Shalom". It was a private altar, the outcome of Gideon's own heart-exercise before God, an exercise which combined command with promise, and brought a deep inward peace by communion with God. Such personal and secret experiences with the Lord are essential if we are to enjoy and prove His power. He was told, however, that he must also erect a public altar, "Build an altar unto the Lord thy God upon the top of this rock . . ." (vi. 26). This was not peace but war! Such a public declaration of being on the Lord's side could only be effected by a repudiation of Baal.

The title 'Baal' simply means Lord, Master, Possessor. In Gideon's home there was this shrine to another god; to one who was a rival to the allegiance, the time and the strength which should have been given to the Lord. What value can our private altar have, however sincere and sacred it may be, if it is contradicted in the eyes of men by subservience to rival claims and interests? This was the major challenge which Gideon had to face, and not he only but every one of us who seeks spiritual power.

This repudiation of the other lords was not a matter of poses or heroics. He was afraid to do it by daytime, so he did it by night. This is in keeping with what we know of the man and of the book, and indeed of what has already been said about the Lord's choice of the foolish and weak things. We should not be too much concerned at how or when he did it, but by the fact that faith means obedience. No doubt a great deal hung on this definite test which the Lord put to him. He might be a weakling; he might be a coward, but he had heard the Lord's voice and he deliberately set out to obey. "Therefore . . ." all the rest of the story was made possible.

Let us make no mistake about it that if the might of the Lord is to be revealed, every other confidence must be completely repudiated. When the new day dawned, everybody concerned knew what Gideon had done, they knew that this was a man whose only hope was in the Lord, and who would throw down every other altar, and be cast utterly and only upon the faithfulness of this Lord. It might have seemed a small thing, this grove and altar. Could that not be left for the time, while

Gideon concentrated on the great task of delivering Israel? Let us suppose that Gideon had done this. Furthermore, let us suppose that God had overlooked it and had still sent Gideon on to battle and to victory. When all was over, there would have been a question as to whether the Lord should have the credit, or whether some or all of the credit should not be given to Baal. This is unthinkable. The Lord will not give His glory to another. If His power is to be displayed, then every other power and name must be repudiated. This explains Gideon's "Therefore".

Gideon's neighbours wanted the deliverance, but they wanted the grove and the altar of Baal as well. This is always true of human nature. Utterness of committal to the Lord is not a popular matter, so that the man who rejects human ability or human fame, to venture all on the sufficiency of the Lord is bound to be misunderstood. For a time it seemed as though Gideon's action had jeopardized all hope of success, as though it might even cost him his life. It is no small thing to make firewood of what one has previously esteemed, to throw off the yoke of bondage to people and things, and to lay everything on the altar of the Lord.

So it was that Gideon started out on the life of faith. It is certain that his obedience must have been very costly, but it is also clear that it brought him his first experience of the faithfulness of God. He did not die. He knew the joy and relief of utter committal to the Lord. And he acquired a new name—Jerubbaal, a name which he carried right through to the end of his life, a name in which was implicit the claim that the man who is on the Lord's side need fear neither the world, the Devil nor the flesh.

## " THEN "

Then what? Popularity? Comfort and ease? A walk-over victory? No, committal to the Lord is no story-book experience of unalloyed prosperity and ease. Far from it. "Then"—that is, as soon as Gideon had acquired this new name by simple and whole-hearted obedience—"Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east assembled themselves together". Later on we are told that "the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like locusts for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand which is upon the sea-shore for multitude . . ." (vii. 12). What had caused this? Had the news of Gideon's action

reached them? It hardly seems likely. No, there was no human explanation for this uprising, and no need for a human explanation, for it is simply a demonstration of a spiritual fact that as soon as any man or group of men do what Gideon did, they may expect a big reaction from the kingdom of darkness. In New Testament language what Gideon had done was to deny himself and take up his cross, which is the only way to spiritual power and victory, but which is also bound to provoke serious opposition.

Gideon's few neighbours now seem as nothing compared with this vast army of enemies. Our deliverances are not meant to provide an afterwards of ease but to prepare the way for still greater trials and more wonderful victories. This is a most important truth, and one which we have often been told, yet when the difficulties arise we so seldom meet them as we should. In such times of stress we are apt to question, to argue, to interfere or to withdraw. We feel that something must be wrong, and long to put the clock back and return to former days which preceded this breaking down of Baal's altar.

Actually nothing is wrong. This threat from the enemy is the most logical and necessary part of a movement forward in faith. This is the meaning of Gideon's "then". The Bible gives many instances of similar assaults on faith. It does not necessarily come quite so quickly as it did in this case, but the reaction of Satan to obedience of faith is inevitable. Indeed it was this very challenge which developed the plan of God to bring deliverance by means of Gideon. This brings us to the next verse.

### " BUT "

Following the "therefore" and the "then" we now come to God's answer, "But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon". At first this must have seemed a very small and inadequate answer to such a gigantic problem. The rest of the dramatic story of deliverance and victory was all consequent on this one simple action of God. He clothed Himself with Gideon. So it was that Gideon was able to go forward in what is called "his might".

There does not seem to be any very striking change in the man himself. He appeared to be just as timorous as ever, so much so that one almost loses patience with him, in his hesitation and continual requests for signs and confirmations. It is good to notice that the Lord did not lose patience. He gave the signs which were requested, and then

He added one last unasked confirmation to encourage His faint-hearted servant.

He had little reason to feel mighty. A good proportion of the first crowd which rallied to him was thankful enough to be excused and allowed to go home. A further substantial number, who were ready to stay on, were found to be unsuitable and were rejected. Even after the first resounding victory, when he was pursuing the foe, nobody would help him because nobody thought he had a chance of full victory. "Faint, but pursuing" is the phrase used to describe him. An honourable phrase, which we might well seek to merit, but not one which suggests overwhelming might or competence.

Nevertheless, God had the matter in hand. That is the force of this "But". There are times when all seems lost—"But God . . ." We do well, however, to notice not only that the Spirit of the Lord had the matter in hand, but the method of His mighty working, he "clothed himself with Gideon".

This is very striking. It does not say that Gideon was clothed with the Spirit, but puts it the other way round. If a man clothes himself with a coat, he takes the coat with him wherever he goes, and makes it a part of his activities. Very often we would like to use the Holy Spirit in this way, to 'put Him on', as it were, and so be able to associate Him with our movements and actions. It was precisely the reverse with Gideon; the Lord was the Person and he, Gideon, but the garment. This is the Divine way. The Lord will provide the life; He only needs us as members through whom to operate and express Himself. So it is that we are asked to present our members "as instruments [or weapons] of righteousness" (Rom. vi. 13).

Gideon illustrates for us the Lord's method of dealing with difficulties, not by removing them but by rising up in new power in the lives of those who have to face them. His answer to the foe's "Then" is the "But" of Divine power which is more than its match. "When the enemy comes in like a flood, then the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him" (Isaiah lix. 19 A.V).

This is not only true of great leaders, but equally so for each single believer. There are reasons to believe that when Paul wrote to the Corinthians, his mind often reverted to this book of Judges. He wrote of the treasure in earthen vessels, which is surely a reference to Gideon's defeat of the Midianites. He may well have been thinking of the second sign with the fleece when he wrote "So



## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

then death worketh in us, but life in you" (II Cor. iv. 12). So it may well be that the reference to God's use of the weak, foolish and base things, made at the beginning of the first letter indicates that any Corinthian believer, yes and any believer of our time too, can put himself in the place of

such as Gideon. We may expect the Spirit to rise up within us to solve our problems. And we may believe that even to us the Lord is saying, "Go, in this thy might". If so, may we faithfully proceed with the "Therefore" of whole-hearted obedience.  
H. F.

## THE STEWARDSHIP OF THE MYSTERY

## CHAPTER SIX

## "THE MYSTERY" IN THE FIRST LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS

"... I came to you ... proclaiming the mystery of God" (I Cor. ii. 1).

"We speak God's wisdom in a mystery ... that hath been hidden, which God foreordained before the worlds unto our glory, which none of the rulers of this world knoweth" (I Cor. ii. 7).

WHEN it is remembered how full this letter is of very practical and earthly things, many of them so sordid and unpleasant (so much so that we might be tempted to wonder whether many of the people concerned were really born again and regenerated), it is all the more impressive that in such a setting the Apostle should keep to his high and profound ground of "The Mystery". But, with all his knowledge of what he had to deal with and what he had got to say, he deliberately referred to that ultimate matter twice in the very early part of his letter. It is evident that the deliberateness of his decision as to the ground that he would take (ii. 2) did not mean a complete descent to the mundane, but a determination to have the mundane dealt with from the heavenly position. That is exactly the point in bringing his particular "stewardship" into such a situation, and it should be noted as a principle for all time. We have heard it argued that it is a mistake to bring the high and ultimate truth into situations which are so contradictory: that we must leave them until things are put right and people are ready for such things.

True, people cannot *enter into* the greater fullness until they are in a right position, but the principle of the Bible is always to make the ultimate vision the motive and dynamic for leaving the low and unsatisfactory levels. The argument of 'coming down to where people are' has resulted in a stultified and subnormal Christianity.

If the second letter to Corinth indicates a real improvement in the situation there, it is because

the Apostle, while repudiating their low level, and drastically dealing with its features, kept the high and ultimate implicit in his ministry to them. Look at such passages as chapter ii, verse 9 to 16, and the whole of chapter xv. Some of the most profound things in all Scripture are in these sections.

We must, then, recognize that it was not artificial on the part of the Apostle to take this line, but the very essence of his ministry. Setting the two things alongside of each other, that is, the record and exposure of the bad conditions at Corinth, and the high, exalted, and profound revelation of "The Mystery", what is the inclusive and supreme implication and conclusion? Surely it lies right on the face of things if we have eyes to see more than the immediate details. It is just this. Christ is God's "Mystery" or Secret.

CHRIST IS GOD'S ETERNAL ANSWER  
TO MAN'S BREAKDOWN

In this letter man's breakdown is both evidently shown and in detail described and demonstrated. If 'Romans' has declared and shown the universality of human sinfulness, giving some evidences and aspects of it, the first letter to the Corinthians makes the universal very concrete and explicit. The essential way of reading and applying what is in this letter is twofold.

First by contrast. These things mentioned and dealt with by the Apostle are *contrary* to the New Creation Man—Christ. Take them as they are referred to—divisions, law-suits, idolatry, fornication, etc.—and the answer is: That is just *not* Christ! Christ is not like that! That is one thing, in one realm. Christ is another, and in another realm. These things have no accord with Christ, and if Christ prevails, *these things will just disappear*. "Christ . . . crucified" means that He is dead to such things, and the Christian is *supposed*

MAY — JUNE, 1963.

to be in the same position. Paul raises the fundamental and universal question in a typical connection. "What concord?" "What in common?" "What fellowship?" asks he as to these contrasts (II Cor. vi. 14 - 15).

Then, following the contrast, is the *measure* of Christ. The contrast indicates the difference in nature; the difference in nature determines the measure of the apprehension of Christ. The Apostle is very emphatic in his statement that the presence of the things mentioned is evidence of spiritual infancy; that is, smallness in stature, limitation in spiritual capacity, undeveloped spiritual intelligence, and childishness in disposition.

Arrested or even retarded spiritual growth is signified by divisions, envies, jealousies, factions, malice, etc. What an indictment! What an exposure! It all speaks of a small measure of Christ. Christ is greater than this.

The cure for such a condition is not better organization; more particular technique; a social reconstruction; discussions; conferences; but a breaking open and breaking down so that the place of that obstructive "I" (I Cor. i. 12, 13) is occupied by more of Christ. Remember that, as at Corinth, so anywhere, the "I" is usually the very *right* 'I' with those concerned. The strength and menace of all egoism, selfhood, is its certainty that it is right, and its inability to even imagine that it may be wrong. Pride is the blindest, and the most blinding thing in the spiritual and moral universe. Hence it is most limiting in true spirituality. Show us the man who is most Christlike, who really has Christly measure, and you show us the least stubborn, obdurate, and certain that he is right; but is most open to "judge himself", as Paul puts it to these Corinthians.

This other, says Paul, is "the natural man" and he labours under handicaps and limitations which keep Christ in the strictest limitation. This man is incorrigible, he cannot be cured. He cannot be taught. He cannot be persuaded. He must die; or rather, he must apprehend that "Christ crucified" really did mean *his*—the natural man's—death.

Let us at this point look again and more intently at the Cross. Let us note that

### CRUCIFIXION IS TRANSFIXION.

The dictionary says that transfixion means to pierce through. If crucifixion means fastening to a cross, or cross-wise, transfixion means the piercing through by which the fastening is made. When

Paul spoke so much about himself and all believers having been "crucified with Christ" he made it abundantly clear that this was more than a doctrine. It was a position and an experience: a position once taken or accepted, and an experience *continually* known and applied. Indeed, although he did not use the actual word, he makes it clear that crucifixion was, and is, transfixion.

There is a sense in which the crucifixion of Christ was but consummated at Calvary. There and then He became the sin-bearer. But the crucifixion—or the Cross—reached forward into His whole life from the time of leaving the glory and becoming incarnate. It commenced in the spiritual realm. There was a spiritual hostility against Him from birth which pointed to the climax of Calvary. All through His life He was 'taking up His cross, and denying—saying, No!—to Himself.' The nails were constantly, so to speak, being driven through His soul. His mind, His will, His feelings, were nailed to the Cross in principle. Again and again—in this sense—He was pierced through. The literal cross of wood had to be, but a literal cross of wood was a symbol of something deeper and greater.

He was transfixed to the Cross when he refused to ask for the legion of angels available for His rescue.

It meant acceptance of helpless weakness and non-deliverance.

It meant: "As a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers"—dumb.

It meant that the very man whom He created was allowed to overpower Him.

It meant that His hands—the symbols of His work and service—were transfixed.

It meant that His feet—the symbols of all His goings—were transfixed.

It meant that His head—the symbol of the government of Himself and all His ways of thought and action—was pierced with thorns.

It meant that His very heart was pierced by the spear; the spring of His life; the integrating and unifying seat of the whole man—pierced through.

While the Christian has no part in the atoning vicariousness of all this, other than to inherit its values, our being "crucified with Christ" does mean transfixion. The mind, the will, the desires; the works, the ways, and the self-determination of our lives, have to be pierced through and brought "into captivity" to Christ.

All this is—if you will look again—an exposition of the First Letter to the Corinthians, and it all flows out of Paul's resolve and its meaning—

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

"I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified".

This is God's Secret, God's hidden wisdom,

God's Mystery for the solving of the age-long problem of human disruption and depravity—it is "Christ crucified".

T. A-S.

## LEADERSHIP

## CHAPTER FOUR

DEBORAH (*Judges iv - v*)

IT is a fairly far cry from Joshua to the Judges, and there is a terrible lapse from those days of triumph and conquest, as there was at the close of the Apostolic days. The Book of Judges is, perhaps, the most tragic book in the Bible.

We are going to look at two of the breaks in the darkness of those times which give us some light on this matter of leadership; that is, in the cases of Deborah and Gideon.

That those were times of spiritual declension needs no arguing. That a primary reason for the declension was the absence of authority is definitely stated four times (xvii. 6, xviii. 1, xix. 1, xxi. 25). It is as though the narrator focused all the trouble upon this absence of an authoritative leadership.

There seems to be more than the statement of a fact. The suggestion or implication is that it was more than an absence of leadership, it was a disposition. When it says that "every man did that which was right in his own eyes", it seems to imply that that was how they were disposed to have it. They did not like the restraints of authority. They felt that leadership implied limitation; they made their own judgment the final authority. As *they* saw was the 'right' way—"right in his own eyes". It was independence run amok.

Possibly the loss of true spirituality and the enthronement of the natural mind had resulted—as it usually does—in an inability to see the difference between spiritual and anointed leadership, on the one hand, and autocracy, on the other. The dislike for and resentment to anything autocratic or in the nature of dictatorship makes people throw over and utterly repudiate law and authority, and become a law unto themselves. The unspiritual Corinthians gave this 'autocratic' interpretation to the authority which Paul said had been given him in Christ. To read his letters to that church is to see how he claimed and used that authority, but it is also to see that it was absolutely necessary to their salvation as a church. But it certainly *was not* autocratic domination.

It is only lack of the spiritual discernment as to "things that differ", although they may appear alike—about which Paul said much to the Corinthians—that confuses things, and loses the values of what is God-given. On the one side it was disastrous for Israel, and meant four hundred years of confusion, weakness, and impotence. On the other hand the salvation and periods of improvement were because the Lord raised up leaders.

When we come to Deborah, we have a significant and impressive thing. There is first Deborah herself, and then there are those to whom she refers when she says: "For that the leaders took the lead . . ." (v. 2).

Deborah overshadows the whole story, therefore she must be seen for what she is. Being a woman in such a position, she must represent a sovereign activity of God.

## DEBORAH AND DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY

The Bible is quite clear that, *in the normal order* of God, women are not set over men. Normally it would be disorder if they were. We state the Bible fact without staying to expound it. In God's first order man is given the position of authority. But here in the case of Deborah we have a woman by Divine consent and approval in that place. It has often been argued that it was because there were no men available or suitable. Much importance has been given to the argument in the evident coercion which Deborah had to use in order to get Barak on his feet. That may be but a feature of abnormal times and conditions, and it may lend force to the statement that, when things are not normal, God acts sovereignly. That is, He transcends His own rules and acts as the One who has the right to do exactly as He wills. That argument may be allowed to stand in this and in other instances, but it does not dispose of the whole matter.

The context of this record, and the fact that, not Deborah but, Barak is mentioned in the list in the letter to the Hebrews carries with it another ex-



MAY — JUNE, 1963.

planation. Why is Deborah left out of the list of heroes of faith in Hebrews xi? The answer surely has to be found in a wider context and one which, after all, upholds not violates Divine principles. If you look *into* the Bible, and not merely *on* it, you will see that

### WOMEN REPRESENT PRINCIPLES

—good or bad. The first woman—Eve—is definitely pointed to as a representation of the Church's relationship to Christ—its Head, and she is shown to have embodied the principle of subjection in honour and glory. Out of that *honourable* subjection the First Adam and the Last Adam realize their destiny by 'being fruitful and multiplying'. The violation of that *principle*—whether in Eve or the Church—has been most disastrous for the race and the world. If Mary, the mother of Jesus, is to receive honour—not homage—it is because she recovered and embodied this primal principle of exalted submission—"Be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke i. 38). There may be humility in that, but there is certainly no humiliation in it. This is a supreme example of the truth to which we are pointing. This truth can more or less easily be traced in a host of women in the Bible—Sarah, Rebecca, Asenath, etc.

In the same way *evil* principles are represented by another line of women, until the Great Harlot, the Scarlet Woman of the Apocalypse is reached; and the very term 'Harlot' betrays the principle. Having established—we think—the *fact* that women represent principles in the Bible, we can return to Deborah.

Deborah, while being a real person, is, in effect, the spirit or principle of leadership. This is borne out in that she is called a Prophetess. What is the supreme characteristic of prophetic ministry? It is inspiration. So we see that leadership in Deborah's case was her power to inspire. Both Barak and the leaders who took the lead fulfilled their leadership by reason of the inspiration received through Deborah. Leadership is a matter of inspiration.

It is an endowment. Not all who take the position can fulfil it. It is a pathetic thing to observe someone in the position without the inspiration or

anointing. That is why it is so wrong and dangerous for anyone either to assume the position or be put into it by vote or human influence.

Let our Godly women realise that their function is not to rule and govern, but to inspire. Deborah said to Barak: "Hath not the Lord commanded . . ." She knew the Lord, and out of that knowledge she was the spirit of inspiration.

It is no *small* thing to see the purpose of God and to inspire to leadership in it. This can be done, as in the case of Deborah, without personally going into the forefront of the battle.

Our lesson, then, from Deborah, is that, whether *officially* in the office of a leader or not, leadership is essentially a matter of the gift and power of inspiration: a contagious influence, an emanating spiritual energy, and a potent example.

### A MOTHER IN ISRAEL

How often is leadership regarded as an official thing. The leader must have a title, an office, an appointment. Deborah teaches us that leadership is the expansion of the mother-spirit to embrace the whole of God's people. "Until that I Deborah arose . . . a mother in Israel" (v. 7). Not 'Till I a leader, a prophetess, a Divinely-chosen instrument arose', but "a mother". Hers was evidently a heart-concern, an affectional-concern for the Lord's people.

We have earlier referred to the revolt against Paul's spiritual authority, but his answer to that was his love, even 'as of a nursing mother' (I Thess. ii. 7, 11), and any seeming severity was born of his very deep paternal or—spiritually—maternal concern for them.

This element *must* be in all leadership; the element of a jealous yearning over the spiritual interests of those concerned. "I arose a mother", said Deborah. The incentive of her inspiring leadership was the mother-passion for a spiritual family.

Back of all that appears and sounds otherwise in the Prophets of Israel, there can always be detected this sigh and sob of a heart-relationship with a wayward family, in trouble because of its waywardness.

T. A-S.

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

## FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

## A BURNING AND A SHINING LIGHT

ON the sideboard in the dining room, Janet's grandmother had three large red candles. They were never lit, and when Janet asked why, she was told that they were not there to give light, but to act as ornaments. Their colour certainly helped to make the room look cosy and bright. When Janet and her parents had a meal with Grandma, Janet sometimes looked round the beautiful room and felt that it was true that the red candles somehow gave a finish to its colour scheme.

Imagine, then, the shame which she felt when one day she broke one of them. She was spending some days of her holiday with her grandmother, and had rushed into the room, swinging a skipping-rope, and down went the candle with a bang. Janet ran hastily to pick it up and replace it, only to find that it could but stand crookedly, for it had been broken by the fall. The candle was spoiled, and there was nothing to do but go to Grandma and confess what she had done.

Now her grandmother did not believe in scolding, but nor did she believe in being careless, so she told Janet what must be done. Instead of the usual present Janet received on her return home, another candle would be bought with the money, and she would have no present. This was fair enough, but Janet was disappointed and made up her mind never to swing a rope indoors again, which means that she had learned her lesson.

When Grannie replaced the broken candle, she was about to throw it away, but first she asked Janet if she would like it. In a sense she had paid for it, so she accepted the offer and took it home, placing it in a drawer in her room, not because she had any idea of using it, but just because it was a pretty colour.

That was last Summer. Early this year, Janet's mother was taken seriously ill. One evening she was lying in bed, anxiously tended by Father, when suddenly all the lights went out. It was a power cut, and it could not have come at a worse moment. Father called out anxiously to Janet, who was in the dark in her own room, asking if she had an electric torch. Alas! though she did possess one, she had left it at school. Father also had one, but its battery was so low that when he switched it on, it gave a small flickering light and then

faded out.

What to do now? There was her mother, gasping for breath and urgently needing her medicine, and no light to find it or to measure it out. Father tried striking matches, but that was hopeless. He appealed to Janet, asking if her mother had not got some sort of oil lamp down in the kitchen. No, answered Janet, there was none that she knew of. "Not even a candle?" asked her father in desperation. "No, not even a candle". But then Janet remembered.

She went to her drawer, and after fumbling around in the dark for a bit, she found the broken candle which she had brought home from her grandmother's. She took the two parts, and hurried into her parents' room with them. In no time Father had lit the top half, and cut away some wax from the other part, so exposing the wick and making it into a second candle.

What a relief for Father! He was soon able to find the right medicine and administer it to the troubled invalid. Soon she fell asleep, and lay there peacefully in the candle-light. When the lights came on again, the candles were burnt down to stubs, but in Janet's eyes the stubs were more beautiful than ever the whole ornamental candle had been. They had done a useful job. It might even be that they had saved Mother's life.

It seemed strange that all this had been possible, only because the candle had been knocked down and broken. But for this it would still have been showing off its beauty in the dining room far away, whereas here it had burned and shined, and been a wonderful help in time of need.

Is it not true that there are two types of Christians. There are those who are content to be ornamental, to be admired, and above all to keep themselves safe and sound. There are others, who may not be admired, who may even be broken, but who are willing to burn themselves out in love for Christ and others. They may become ugly stubs, but that ugliness is more beautiful than if they had merely remained ornamental. Of them, as of John the Baptist, it may be said, "He was a burning and a shining light" (John 5. 35), and there can be no greater praise than that for any of us.

H. F.

MAY — JUNE, 1963.

## “ HERE AM I ; SEND ME ”

“ I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us ! Then said I, Here am I ; send me.” (Isaiah vi. 8).

WHENEVER these words have been used in Christian circles—and they have been, and still are, very frequently employed—it is almost invariably in relation to missionary work among the ‘ heathen ’ or in non-Christian countries. It may, therefore, be something of a surprise and, maybe, a shock to have it pointed out that they were never so related when first spoken. Not the ‘ heathen ’ or ‘ nations ’, but the Lord’s own people were the occasion of this missionary call and challenge. The Prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and others—were called to be missionaries to the people of God, and God only knew how desperately necessary that was!

Never was a ‘ heathen ’ nation more desperately in need of missionaries than were the Lord’s people in those times. Speaking generally, we should find very little more sympathy and support than did those ‘ missionaries ’ if we said the same things of the Lord’s people to-day. Indeed, we should receive the same kind of treatment—in different ways—that was served out to them.

But there are two things to say about this. Why all the Conventions and Conferences? Why all the magazines and literature, and books? Why all the preaching and teaching? All of which carries as its strongest note and emphasis the unsatisfactory condition of Christians to-day. There is a wholesale deploring of that condition, and there is no fundamental basis for all these conventions and special spiritual occasions if all is well and as it should be. That is a general fact, although we may not take account of all those who have a *special* ‘ axe to grind ’, some particular line or aspect of teaching. The measure or degree of feeling and conclusion as to the declension or poor condition will be discerned in the messages given and emphases made.

There is, however, a further and much greater factor in the appraisal, and this is by no means general.

On what ground and as a result of what did this ‘ missionary ’ call and challenge come to the prophet? If that question were to be put to Isaiah, to any other prophet, or to Paul, Peter, John ; that is : How did you come to see and to feel as you do? How did you come to be so utterly committed to

and involved in this mission and ministry? Their answer—with one voice—would be: “ I saw the Lord ”!

## “ I SAW THE LORD ”

That was all, but that was enough. Whether it was Moses at one end or John at the other—with the many between—their life and work was due to their having seen the Lord. But that seeing of the Lord always meant a seeing of what the Lord wanted as opposed to the existing state. It was a comparison and a contrast. It is always impossible to see the Lord and to remain satisfied with things as they are. Any seeing of the Lord means a new seeing of what He wants, and is therefore a challenge and a commission. As in the time of Eli and Samuel the low spiritual state was because “ there was no open vision ”.

There is therefore only one thing for the real spiritual purifying and uplifting of the people of God, and for their release from the captivity of lesser conditions, and that is a new revelation or seeing of the Lord. This will produce ashamedness, sorrow, repentance, and a new committal. It will humble us, it will empty us ; but it will inspire us.

The most vital reality of seeing the Lord is not in the immediate emotional effect, but in the fact that we see the Lord Himself as the model or pattern of everything. We spend so much time and energy on plans, orders, arrangements, and forms. But the Lord is all that in Himself, and the government of the Holy Spirit will result in an *organic reproduction* of the Lord as the sum of all things.

Despite all our fussing and effort to reproduce a ‘ New Testament Order ’ we never get more than a man-made institution. The New Testament and what is there never came about in that way. If ever they got near to arranging things by discussion (and they did once, at least), the thing touched earth, touched death, and the result was stalemate. Everything then was the free and spontaneous movement of the Holy Spirit, and He did it in full view of the Pattern—God’s Son. The ministry of the Holy Spirit has ever been to reveal Jesus Christ, and in revealing Him, to conform everything to Him.

No human genius can do this. We cannot obtain anything in our New Testament as the result of human study, research, or reason. It is all the Holy Spirit’s *revelation* of Jesus Christ. Ours it is



## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

to seek continually to see Him by the Spirit, and we shall know that He—not a paper-pattern—is the Pattern, the Order, the Form. It is *all* a Person who is the sum of all purpose and ways.

Who will say that the Lord's people do not need above all things men and ministries which have

behind them this dynamic—"I saw the Lord".

There is a desperate need for missionaries to scattered, defeated, and imprisoned 'Israel'—the spiritual Israel—of such as have seen the Lord and who are thus in a position—the only right position—to say: "Here am I; send me."

T. A-S.

## "THIS IS THE MESSAGE . . . FELLOWSHIP"

Reading: I John i. 1 - ii. 1.

JOHN uses the phrase 'This is' ten times in his brief letter, and the first of his identification of things is this one in verse five: "This is the message which we have heard from him". And if you look to see what the message is, you will see that it focuses upon one word, a word which is repeatedly used in the first part of the letter. It is the word 'fellowship'. It occurs twice in verse three, again in verse six, and again in verse seven; and the recurrence of this word indicates that here is something about which the Apostle is evidently greatly concerned in relation to believers.

The main issue with which John was concerned, in His Gospel, in his Letters, and in his great Apocalypse—the Book of the Revelation, the supreme, inclusive issue was this matter of life. I suggest that you read even the Book of the Revelation with that word in mind, and you will be tremendously impressed. This is the issue all the way through. It is the matter of livingness. Early in that book you have the "living creatures" (Rev. iv. 6) and "the Spirit of life" (Rev. xi. 11). The book closes with "the river of water of life" (Rev. xxii. 1), "the tree of life" (Rev. xxii. 2), and so on.

It is quite evident that the question, or the issue, with which John was so greatly concerned for believers, was not that they should *have* life—that was the object of his Gospel, but that they should *know*, that is, live continually in the consciousness of possessing this life. So he says: "That ye may know that ye have eternal life" (I John v. 13).

Now you may see how he links these two things together at the outset. He will link other things with the matter of life as he goes on with his letter, but right at the outset, in this first section, he links the matter of fellowship with life. These two things are brought together, and it is as though he were saying—indeed, he is saying in other words: 'Life is a matter of fellowship and fellowship is a matter of life.'

## A FAMILY FELLOWSHIP

And what is the nature of this fellowship? Well, it is quite evidently a family fellowship, because you notice it is: "Our fellowship is with the *Father*, and with his *Son*". And then John says: "My little *children*". So it is quite a family thing: Father, Son and little children; Father, Son and the rest of the family. It is a family fellowship.

And what again does that mean? It is, of course, a nice word, a pleasant idea, but a family is built upon one life; just constituted by one life, isn't it? The great trust of life has been fulfilled, for life is a trust. It is something committed for transmission, for passing on, for reproduction. That great trust of life has been fulfilled, and the family is the result of the letting go, the giving up of life, the distribution of life. So that every member of a true family is a part of one life, all sharing a single life. In every one there is the same life. It will manifest itself in different ways, and, of course, that is the mystery and wonder of life. We cannot stay with that, interesting and instructive as it is, but in a family you have so great a variety, all from the one source, from the one life—variety of disposition, temperament, and so on, all in one family. But it is one life expressing itself in many ways.

The Lord's family is like that. Sometimes we are rather inclined to want all the members of the family to be exactly alike, to think the same thing and do the same thing. Really we want them uniform, but the Lord does not do it like that, either in the natural creation or in the family. That does not alter the fact that it is His own one life in all expressing itself in a multitude of different ways, but all coming from the one source. It is a family life. We all, therefore, share the life of the Father through the Son, and we are the little children—and God forbid that we should ever be more than little children in the family, that is, in spirit! There is a growing up, there is such a thing as maturity,

MAY — JUNE, 1963.

but it is a good thing that however old we are in this Christian life and experience, however much we have learnt, we are still there where we know that we still have everything to learn, that we are only at the beginning of things. That is a good mark. It is a very bad mark when anyone in the family thinks he knows it all! That upsets the family, doesn't it? It just ruins everything if any think they know—they have no need to learn anything else, they have got it all, they know it all. Oh! that spiritual pride has been the cause of many divisions. However, that is by the way.

Here we are with this fellowship, and we want to compress into a short space a little on two matters in this very connection.

First of all, this fellowship just dates right back to God's eternal, primary desire to share His life, and by thus sharing it to have fellowship between His creation and Himself; just clear, pure, open, unsullied fellowship between Himself and man, between man and Himself. Is not that the first picture of the relationship of man with God? In the garden they walked in the cool of the evening, in blessed fellowship; God and the man whom He had made. That fellowship was something very precious to the Lord. We cannot understand why God, all self-sufficient, so full and so wonderful and so mighty, and, in a sense, so absolutely independent and sovereign, should find this in His heart, to have a creation with which He could have this kind of fellowship, as Father with a family. But there it is. That is what the Bible reveals as God's desire at the beginning. And this fellowship of which John is speaking just dates right back to that. You see, "our fellowship is with the Father"—that takes up the eternal thought and desire of God and brings it here right into expression amongst the Lord's children now.

## FELLOWSHIP THE FOUNDATION OF ALL

Now then, the very first thing in the Christian life is this matter of fellowship, union with God. The strain has gone, the breach has gone, the distance has gone, the isolation has gone, and everything that kept God and us apart has gone when we come into what we call 'new birth'. When we are begotten of God and born of the Spirit, then it is union with God. That is the foundation of everything. Let it be clearly understood that that is not only just an act which is carried out and finished, but it is the very basis and foundation upon which God is going to do everything. All God's hopes are bound up with that. All God's intentions are

bound up with that. All God's purposes are bound up with that. All God's interests for time and for eternity are based upon this fellowship-union between Himself and His children, and His children and Himself. That is why this is such a battle, because God has vested in this very thing *everything* for which He hopes; and *everything* that He has purposed and planned He has just vested in this. It is God's great investment. And you know, when you come to the end of the Old Testament you find that the prophets are in a state of Divine distress because God has lost His family. The great word that governs those prophetic utterances is that God has been robbed of something. God has been robbed; something upon which He placed so much importance, indeed, upon which everything hung, has been stolen from God. God has been robbed of it. This family relationship between Himself and His people, has been stolen from Him. Therefore God in a sense is in desolation until that is recovered, and His people are also in desolation until that relationship is recovered and restored and re-established.

This is what John, by the Spirit, is talking about, saying that God has done something in us in bringing about a union. But it does not end there. All God's investment is in that union. He has invested all His hopes, all His purposes, all His expectations, all His interests in this union, this fellowship-union with Himself. All that we are ever going to come into, dear friends, of those great purposes and designs of God is going to be on this basis of our fellowship with God, our maintained fellowship with God. God works on that basis. Get out of fellowship with God and everything comes to a standstill. We know that quite well. If anything cuts across our fellowship with God, well, all has gone. It is as though everything is lost, and we know quite well that there is no going on, no getting on, no hope whatever until we get back and have that relationship put right and the way clear with the Lord. How much there is, then, bound up with this relationship!

Now, how is it to be? John tells us: "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another". With Him, of course; "our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son . . ." "if we walk in the light . . . we have fellowship".

Fellowship rests, then, upon walking in the light, "as he is in the light". John says: "This is the message . . . that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all . . . If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship".

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

What does that mean? It means far more than I can put into few words, but let us look at the Lord Jesus, because this is what John is saying: 'This is what we have heard from *Him*; this is what we have seen in *Him*; this is what we have handled of *Him*—the Son.' And he is saying: 'This is what the Son did.' He walked in the light with the Father. How did He do it, What did that mean to Him, Well, in the case of the Lord Jesus He always raised one question about everything in His life—His movements, His goings or comings or stayings, His not moving, His doing this or not doing that; everything with Him was governed by a question—'Is this in the Father's interests? Or is it in My own interest? Or am I governed by some other influence—ideas, policy, for instance? Is it politic to do this? Or how does it affect the Father? Is it in My interest or is it in the Father's interest?' He subjected everything, even His physical, quite legitimate physical requirements. He hungered, as we hunger in body—and it is not a sinful thing, is it, to take food when the body needs it? But there were times when Jesus said, 'That is secondary. There are interests of My Father to be served, so even those legitimate things in which there is nothing sinful or wrong must just stand aside while I attend to My Father's business.'

That is what He said at Sychar's Well, to the disciples. They came and said: "Rabbi, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not . . . My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work." (John iv. 31, 32, 34). Well, He hungered. He sent them to buy food because He was hungry and they were hungry. When they brought it back—'That can wait. There are other interests. My Father's interests come first, before even My legitimate needs can be met.'

In the wilderness, with the Devil: "Command that these stones become bread" (Matthew iv. 3). His question was: 'Where does this come from? From the Father or from another source? Is the Father's interest going to be served supremely by My doing that?' He decided 'No'. For the time being, after forty days of fasting, He hungered. Nevertheless—wait—'I am in a spiritual battle, and it is the spiritual interests that have to be established before I can allow these perfectly legitimate things to have their place.'

You see what I mean? His life was like that. He was walking in the light with the Father. 'Father,

is this Your pleasure? Is it of You that I go here, that I do that? If I have not the witness that it is of You, then it must wait. It must be set aside.' There may be nothing wrong in a thing in itself, but nevertheless there is something higher than a life of 'Oh, there is no harm in it'. Many Christians are governed by that! 'Oh, you know, there is no harm in it. Other people do it. There is no sin about that—it is quite a natural thing.' But there is a higher standard than 'no harm in it'! That is negative! The positive life of the Lord Jesus is: 'What about the Father? What does He think about this? What is His mind on this?'

## WALKING IN THE LIGHT

The Lord Jesus would not allow a shadow to come in between Him and His Father, not one bit of darkness to break in upon that relationship. He knew that the only way and the only ground for the fulfilment of the purpose for which He had come was by walking in the light with His Father.

So John says here that we ought to walk as He walked. Note it in chapter two: "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also to walk even as he walked" (I John ii. 6). "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another". Fellowship demands that you and I shall be walking with God. If one is not walking with God, not walking in the light, fellowship is interrupted. If some are walking in the light and others are not walking in the light, fellowship is arrested, and our fellowship, which, as I have said, means so much to the Lord and to us, requires that we are all keeping an open Heaven with God, that we are all walking in a transparent fellowship with Him, that we are all so committed to Him that any other interests, no matter what they are, come second to this: 'What does the Lord want in this situation? How does the Lord look at this? That is the thing that governs and I am going to walk according to that, God helping me, as the Spirit bears witness in me to the Will of God, I will walk in the light.'

If we all do this, oh, how wonderful the fellowship will be, and how the Lord will be able to take us on in all the fulness and purpose of His desire, and fulfil Himself in us and through us!

Now, there is very much more, but that will be enough for us to get on with for the moment.

T. A-S.



## THE TRUE NATURE OF NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY

**I**N what we are now, by the Lord's help, essaying to set forth, we are making a bold and honest attempt to uncover the true nature of New Testament Christianity. It is in the way of spiritual excavation, to lay bare the essential foundation and character of that which took its rise from the ascension and heavenly session of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It would be an over-bold person who, at this time of day, thought that anything that he could do would seriously change or affect the face of Christianity as it now exists, and no such illusion or delusion prompts these pages. But, having travelled far and wide over the world for many years, and having come into contact with Christians of very many connections and complexions, the writer has found a great amount of unrest, perplexity, dissatisfaction, and disappointment among them. Many older Christians are feeling that things are not as they should be, while the younger generation is in a state nearing revolt. It is felt—and there are few who will disagree—that Christianity in general, with some few notable exceptions, is failing to register any impact upon world-conditions, or is no longer something to be taken serious account of.

What we are about to offer, then, is for the troubled and perplexed minority who would be grateful for any help to understand the meaning of things and that would point the way to that which the Lord would have if He were given His ground. We can but hope that we shall be able to throw some light upon the beclouded way. There is no thought of instituting a new 'Movement' or forming a new body of Christians. The probability is that there will be some strong adverse reactions to some things said, but we can only ask for patient and open-hearted consideration, taking nothing out of its full context to give it an exaggerated interpretation.

### THE NEW DEUTERONOMY

Behind the subject-matter of the New Testament there is a feature which is not always recognized. It is that which corresponds to the Book of Deuteronomy in the Old Testament; the fifth book of the Bible. That book was written with the object of restating precisely that which had been covered earlier in several books. The restatement had two aspects.

One, there had been a history of the people of God which, while it had been marked by His wonderful works of power and mercy—signs, wonders, and glories, had also been darkened with failure and tragedy on their part. A crisis had been reached and a chapter was closing.

Secondly; the call to adjustment was sounding out, and a new day was being presented. A calling to remembrance, a warning against repeating the mistakes, and an earnest appeal, comprised this new document to govern the future. The future was going to be one of greater glory or of deeper tragedy. They must decide.

These are the very two features which lie behind the New Testament writings. When these documents were written a point of crisis and departure had been reached. There had been a period of great glory, power, and progress. Mighty and wonderful things had been done by God amongst His people in the midst of the nations, but certain elements were beginning to show themselves which were threatening the very vitality of their testimony and world-mission. There was a growing threat to the purity and reality of the life of the Church, and there were symptoms of spiritual decline and retrogression. So we find the Apostles giving themselves to write the Deuteronomic documents to remind, to warn, to rebuke, to exhort, to encourage, and to urge God's people to either recover, maintain, or go on in relation to the full purpose of their high calling in Christ. We ought to read John, Peter, Paul, and others in this light. Like Moses, they wrote with an 'after my departure' concern. It was all reminder and reconsideration with the future in view. Were we to put into two words that which we feel to have been the real burden of their writings we should say it was:

### CORPORATE TESTIMONY.

When we have said that we have got within view of the nature of true New Testament Christianity. But we must first define those terms. After we have done that we shall proceed to consider some of the privileges, perils, and problems of corporate testimony.

What does the New Testament mean when it so often, especially at the end, refers to "The Testimony". A simple reading of the context will show that it does not refer to any particular aspect of "The Truth". It is not particularly the truth of

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

the Cross, the Church, the Coming Again of the Lord, or any other. It is not a 'line of teaching' or particular angle of interpretation or emphasis. It is not the propagation of certain doctrines. Neither is "the Testimony" related to certain ordinances or 'sacraments' such as 'Baptism', 'the Lord's Table', etc. These things may have a vital place in the Testimony when it is truly present, but they are not the Testimony.

The Testimony is the place and meaning of Jesus Christ, God's Son, in the eternal counsels of God; His universal fulness as Head of all creation; which carries with it the essential nature of His Person as the eternal Son of God. It is the *Person*, and particularly the significance of that Person in God's universe and entire system of things. The heart of the Testimony is His absolute triumph over, and destruction of, death by His own 'becoming dead, and being alive for evermore'. This is but a broad and general statement, for it does not say what that universal significance is, but what we have said serves to put the Testimony in its right realm; out of parts into a whole.

The second term to be defined is 'corporate'. While this word is not found in our translations of the Bible, it is inherent therein from beginning to end. Literally and fundamentally it means 'of the body'; that is, 'an organic body matter'. It is the organic and vital unity of a living entity, whether it be in the individual or in the collective relatedness of many. As differing from a stone or wooden structure or composition it is constituted by a single life; it is generic. In that life is an energy. In that life is a nature. In that life is a pattern. In that life is a destiny. To share that life is to share all these impulses.

Thus, in every category or class of animate creatures, God began with a 'seed' in which the germ of its own life, nature, and design existed. The family was inherent in the seed, and the family had the race as its horizon. The first generic person failed in the trust of life and his horizon became beclouded by death. God moved again in Abraham and secured through his faith and obedience, first a nation, and then the far-off 'Seed' in which and by which the ultimate heavenly race will be se-

cured. This is the *new* creation in Christ, sharing the one life which He came specifically and pre-eminently to give. This one unique heavenly life, imparted as a particular gift to every one who in 'new birth' is generated by the act of the Spirit of God, binds them together in corporate, organic, basic oneness. It is a *fact*, not always understood, appreciated, or lived up to. The values and meanings of this fact are only entered into by growth in that life and obedience to its laws, but the fact is deeper than the understanding, just as the fact of the organic unity, function, and laws of the human body are deeper than the knowledge of the uninstructed man or woman.

So far we have only indicated what is meant by the term 'corporate'. The fuller meaning will naturally come out in all that we have to say as we go on.

Putting the two terms together—Corporate Testimony, we can now say that 'the Testimony', which is God's testimony concerning His Son, now known to us as Jesus Christ the Lord, with all its vast significance and limitless values and meanings, is intended by God to be incorporated in, revealed in, and expressed through, a corporate Body and spiritual organism known as The Body of Christ. This Body was foreknown and foreordained by God for its eternal vocation "before times eternal". It is *the* supreme object of the Holy Spirit's activities and energies in this present dispensation. It is the essential motif of evangelism, and the purpose of all Christian instruction, discipline, and experience. Its securing "out of the nations" and preparation is the governing purpose of this age, and its *full* vocation, function, and glory will be through "the ages of the ages". It is never meant to be an end in itself, but its ultimate issue is found in the words:

*"Unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever"*  
(Ephesians iii. 20, 21).

Fuller previews of the eternal position, glory and vocation of this corporate vessel in testimony are given us in Revelation v. 6 - 14, and in chapter xxi.

T. A-S.

✠

(to be continued)

MAY — JUNE, 1963.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We acknowledge with gratitude the following gifts received during February and March, 1963.

Aberdare £7 ; Abergavenny 10s.; Abertillery 10s.; Arnold 10s. 6d.; Asmara, Eritrea £1 ; Belfast £1 ; Benbecula £1 8s.; Bolton 10s.; Bristol 5s.; Brynmawr 10s.; Calgary, Canada 5s.; Canterbury £1 10s.; Cheam £3 ; Deal £1, £1 ; Dereham £2 2s.; 10s.; Dublin £1, £2, £2, £5 ; Earls Barton 3s. 3d.; Findon 10s.; Frankford, Canada £1 ; Galashiels 10s.; Glasgow £2 2s.; Greenock £3 10s.; Grinstead, Denmark £5 ; Hamburg, Germany £1 ; High Wycombe 10s.; Hirwaun £1 ; Hollis Center, Maine £2 ; Hove 6s.; Humbie £1 ; Ightham 7s. 6d.; Liverpool £2 6s. 6d.; Lokosa, Nigeria £1 ; London, N.7—£1 ; N.W.9—£10 ; S.E.23—10s. 6d., £1, £1, 5s., 10s., £5, £5, 10s., 5s., £20 ; S.E.25—10s.; S.W.4—10s., £2 ; W.1—£2 10s.; Meols 10s.; Merthyr Tydfil £5 ; Newcastle-on-Tyne 10s.; Niagara Falls, Canada £1 12s. 10d.; Norwich £10 ; Opawa, New Zealand £2 ; Paris, France 5s.; Poole £1 ; Port Dinorwic 5s., 5s., 5s.; Sale £1 ; Shirley 7s. 6d.; Solsqua, Canada £2 10s.; Southampton 10s., 10s.; South Shields 7s.; Spennymoor £1 ; Sunbury-on-Thames 10s.; Tunbridge Wells 5s.; Tyrley £10 ; Vevey, Switzerland 5s. 6d.; Virginia Water £2 ; Welling 8s.; Winterthur, Switzerland £1 2s. 6d.

Total                    £147 14s. 7d.

Allentown, Pa. \$1 ; Arlington, Va. \$5, \$5 ; Austin, Texas \$5 ; Boulder, Colo. \$2, \$1 ; Brooklyn, N.Y. \$0.96, \$1.25 ; Brooks, Oregon \$1 ; Camden, N.J. \$2 ; Chicago, Ill \$6 ; Collingswood, N.J. \$2 ;

Collinsville, Ill. \$5 ; Colorado Springs \$2 ; Council Bluffs, Iowa \$10 ; Dayton, Ohio \$3.04 ; Detroit, Mich. \$3 ; E.Lansdowne, Pa. \$5 ; Falmouth, Maine \$10.96 ; Fort Worth, Texas \$5 ; Franklin, Ga. \$5 ; Grand Rapids, Mich. \$1 ; Granite City, Ill. \$10 ; Haddonfield, N.J. \$2 ; Harrisonburg, Va. \$1 ; Highland Park, Mich. \$10 ; Huntington Station, N.Y. \$1 ; Hutchinson, Kansas \$1 ; Jamestown, N.Y. \$1 ; Lorain, Ohio \$1.50 ; Louisville, Ky. \$3 ; Lynchburg, Va. \$2 ; Mansfield, Mass. \$10 ; Marion, Ohio \$1 ; Minneapolis, Minn. \$5, \$20 ; Monroe, Mich. \$1 ; Montgomery, Ala. \$10 ; Murfreesboro, Tenn. \$5 ; North St. Paul, Minn. \$6.04 ; Orange, N.J. \$12 ; Orlando, Fla. \$2.50 ; Pasadena, Calif. \$6 ; Philadelphia, Pa. \$5 ; Pickens, S.C. \$1 ; Runnemede, N.J. \$2 ; Safety Harbor, Fla. \$10, \$1 ; San Antonio, Texas \$5 ; Seattle, Wash. \$2, \$7 ; Stanton, Iowa \$3 ; Staples, Minn. \$5 ; Stratton, Nebr. \$1 ; Syracuse, N.Y. \$1, \$1 ; Trussville, Ala. \$3 ; Watertown, Mass. \$3 ; Wichita, Kansas \$10 ; Woodstock, Ill. \$2 ; Youngstown, Ohio \$3.65

Total                    \$258.90

Athens, Ont. C.\$2.00 ; Calgary, Alberta C.\$50.00 ; Hawarden, Sask. C.\$0.50 ; Port Credit, Ont. C.\$1.00

Total                    C.\$53.50

Oberdiessbach, Switzerland Sw. Fcs. 20.00

St. Lucia, Australia £A 5. 0. 0.

Opawa, New Zealand £NZ 1. 0. 0.

---

## SPECIAL MEETINGS IN SWITZERLAND

### A REMINDER

As announced in the last issue, we are hoping—in the Lord's will—to have a further time of conference at Aeschi in the Bernese Oberland this year. The dates are:

6th to 16th SEPTEMBER

May we again stress the need for *an early application* to avoid disappointment. This should be addressed to:—

The Conference Secretary,  
30, Dunoon Road,  
London, S.E. 23, England.



## WITNESS AND TESTIMONY LITERATURE

<i>By T. A-S.</i>			
GOD'S REACTIONS TO MAN'S DEFECTIONS . . . . .	7/-	(\$1.50)	
RIVERS OF LIVING WATER . . . . .	6/-	(\$1.28)	
PROPHETIC MINISTRY . . . . .	5/6	(\$1.18)	
OUR WARFARE . . . . .	4/6	(\$0.96)	
PIONEERS OF THE HEAVENLY WAY . . . . .	4/6	(\$0.96)	
THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO PAUL . . . . .	4/6	(\$0.96)	
WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CHRISTIAN . . . . .	4/6	(\$0.96)	
FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE	4/6	(\$0.96)	
THE GOLD OF THE SANCTUARY . . . . .	4/-	(\$0.85)	
THE CENTRALITY AND UNIVERSALITY OF THE CROSS	3/-	(\$0.64)	
WE BEHELD HIS GLORY (VOL. II) (cloth boards)	4/6	(\$0.96)	
(Art paper covers)	3/6	(\$0.75)	
THE BATTLE FOR LIFE . . . . .	2/6	(\$0.53)	
GOD'S SPIRITUAL HOUSE . . . . .	1/6	(\$0.32)	
THE WORK OF GOD AT THE END TIME . . . . .	1/6	(\$0.32)	
HIS GREAT LOVE . . . . .	1/6	(\$0.32)	
THE SCHOOL OF CHRIST . . . . .	1/6	(\$0.32)	
UNION WITH CHRIST . . . . .	1/6	(\$0.32)	
GOD HATH SPOKEN . . . . .	1/-	(\$0.21)	
THE ULTIMATE ISSUE OF THE UNIVERSE . . . . .	9d	(\$0.16)	
THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT . . . . .	6d	(\$0.11)	
THE WATCHWORD OF THE SON OF MAN . . . . .	4d	(\$0.07)	
BETHANY . . . . .	3d	(\$0.05)	
THE SUPREME VOCATION . . . . .	3d	(\$0.05)	
CHRIST—ALL, AND IN ALL . . . . .	3d	(\$0.05)	
CHRIST IN HEAVEN AND CHRIST WITHIN . . . . .	2d	(\$0.04)	
THE ARM OF THE LORD . . . . .	2d	(\$0.04)	
THE GOD OF THE AMEN . . . . .	2d	(\$0.04)	
THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA } . . . . .	1/6 a dozen	(\$0.32)	
THE CROSS OF CHRIST ( <i>The Zero hour of the Creation</i> ) . . . . .	1d	(\$0.02)	
THINGS THAT DIFFER . . . . .	1d	(\$0.02)	
THE BATTLEGROUND OF THE SOUL . . . . .	1d	(\$0.02)	
A GOD THAT HIDETH HIMSELF . . . . .	1d	(\$0.02)	
<i>By G.P.</i>			
THE GOSPEL IN THE FARMYARD ( <i>For the Children, 110 pages. Illustrated</i> ) . . . . .	4/-	(\$0.85)	
GOSPEL MESSAGES FROM THE ANTARCTIC ( <i>For the Children 170 pages. Illustrated</i> ) . . . . .	5/-	(\$1.07)	
<i>By H.F.</i>			
THE CHURCH'S PRAYER AND SPIRITUAL INCREASE	2d	(\$0.04)	
THE REALITY OF GOD'S HOUSE . . . . .	2d	(\$0.04)	
THE CHURCH AS GOD WANTS IT TO-DAY . . . . .	2d	(\$0.04)	
THE CHALLENGE OF THE IMPOSSIBLE } . . . . .	2d.	(\$0.04)	
{ 1/6 a dozen		(\$0.32)	
READY FOR THE KING ( <i>For the Children, 48 pages. Illustrated</i> ) . . . . .	1/6	(\$0.32)	
ON WINGS OF FAITH ( <i>For the Children, 52 pages. Illustrated</i> ) . . . . .	2/-	(\$0.43)	
BURIED TREASURE ( <i>For the Children, 48 pages. Illustrated</i> ) . . . . .	2/-	(\$0.43)	
<i>By A.I.K.</i>			
THIS IS THE VICTORY . . . . .	3d	(\$0.05)	
<i>By W.N.</i>			
SIT WALK STAND . . . . .	2/-	(\$0.45)	
<i>An extract from</i>			
THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE . . . . .	3d	(\$0.05)	
<i>By W.L.</i>			
A GOD WHO HIDES HIMSELF . . . . .	2d	(\$0.04)	
SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE (CONSECRATION) } . . . . .	2d.	(\$0.04)	
{ 1/6 a dozen		(\$0.32)	



JULY — AUGUST, 1963.

VOL. 41. No. 4.

CONTENTS

THE WANING AUTHORITY OF CHRIST IN THE CHURCHES ... .. 69	WHY ARE YOU HERE ? ... .. 75
THE RISE, THE NOON, THE SUNDOWN OF A GREAT CHURCH ... .. 72	LEADERSHIP (v continued) ... .. 78
	FOR BOYS AND GIRLS ... .. 80
	THE STEWARDSHIP OF THE MYSTERY (VI contd.) 81

EDITOR'S NOTE. *It will be known to most of our readers that the Editor is at present in The United States, where he has been for the past nearly four months. For eight weeks of that time he has been ministering at The Gospel Tabernacle of The Christian and Missionary Alliance, New York City. This has permitted him to have fellowship with some of the responsible people in The Alliance. On request, the Editor of THE ALLIANCE WITNESS has accorded glad permission to reproduce in A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY the following message from the pen of the late DR A.W.TOZER. We feel that there is so much, both in substance and in principle, which needs to be given heed to by all Christians, and especially those in positions of responsibility. We have abridged the article for the purpose of this paper, but it is being reproduced in pamphlet form by the Alliance, and we can advise as to how it can be obtained. During the time that the Editor has been in the States Dr. TOZER has been suddenly called to the Lord, and his going is a great loss to the Church of God.*

**THE WANING AUTHORITY OF CHRIST IN THE CHURCHES**

*Among the gospel churches Christ is in fact little more than a beloved symbol. . . . The Lordship of Jesus is not quite forgotten, but it has been mostly relegated to the hymnal where all responsibility toward it may be discharged in a glow of pleasant religious emotion.*

**H**ERE is the burden of my heart ; and while I

claim for myself no special inspiration I yet feel that this is also the burden of the Spirit.  
 If I know my own heart it is love alone that moves me to write this. What I write here is not the sour ferment of a mind agitated by contentions with my fellow Christians. There have been no such contentions. I have not been abused, mistreated or attacked by anyone. Nor have these

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

observations grown out of any unpleasant experiences that I have had in association with others. My relations with my own church as well as with Christians of other denominations have been friendly, courteous and pleasant. My grief is simply the result of a condition which I believe to be almost universally prevalent among the churches.

I think also that I should acknowledge that I am myself very much involved in the situation I here deplore. As Ezra in his mighty prayer of intercession included himself among the wrongdoers, so do I. "O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens." Any hard word spoken here against others must in simple honesty return upon my own head. I too have been guilty. This is written with the hope that we all sin no more against Him.

Let me state the cause of my burden. It is this: *Jesus Christ has today almost no authority at all among the groups that call themselves by His name.* By these I mean not the Roman Catholics, nor the Liberals, nor the various quasi-Christian cults. I do mean Protestant churches generally, and I include those that protest the loudest that they are in spiritual descent from our Lord and His apostles, namely the evangelicals.

It is a basic doctrine of the New Testament that after His resurrection the Man Jesus was declared by God to be both Lord and Christ, and that He was invested by the Father with absolute Lordship over the church which is His body. All authority is His in heaven and in earth. In His own proper time He will exert it to the full, but during this period in history He allows this authority to be challenged or ignored. And just now it is being challenged by the world and ignored by the church.

The present position of Christ in the gospel churches may be likened to that of a king in a limited constitutional monarchy. The king (sometimes depersonalised by the term "the Crown") is in such a country no more than a traditional rallying point, a pleasant symbol of unity and loyalty much like a flag or a national anthem. He is lauded, fêted and supported, but his real authority is small. Nominally he is head over all, but in every crisis someone else makes the decisions. On formal occasions he appears in his royal attire to deliver the tame, colorless speech put into his mouth by the real rulers of the country. The whole thing may be no more than good-natured make-believe, but it is rooted in antiquity, it is a lot of fun and no one wants to give it up.

Among the gospel churches Christ is now in fact little more than a beloved symbol. "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name" is the church's national anthem and the cross is her official flag, but in the week-by-week services of the church and the day-by-day conduct of her members someone else, not Christ, makes the decisions. Under proper circumstances Christ is allowed to say "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden" or "Let not your heart be troubled", but when the speech is finished someone else takes over. Those in actual authority decide the moral standards of the church, as well as all objectives and all methods employed to achieve them. Because of long and meticulous organization it is now possible for the youngest pastor just out of seminary to have more actual authority in a church than Jesus Christ has.

Not only does Christ have little or no authority; His influence also is becoming less and less. I would not say that He has none, only that it is small and diminishing. A fair parallel would be the influence of Abraham Lincoln over the American people. Honest Abe is still the idol of the country. The likeness of his kind, rugged face, so homely that it is beautiful, appears everywhere. It is easy to grow misty-eyed over him. Children are brought up on stories of his love, his honesty and his humility. But after we have gotten control over our tender emotions what have we left? No more than a good example which, as it recedes into the past, becomes more and more unreal and exercises less and less real influence. Every scoundrel is ready to wrap Lincoln's long black coat around him. In the cold light of political facts in the United States the constant appeal to Lincoln by the politicians is a cynical joke.

The Lordship of Jesus is not quite forgotten among Christians, but it has been mostly relegated to the hymnal where all responsibility toward it may be comfortably discharged in a glow of pleasant religious emotion. Or if it is taught as a theory in the classroom it is rarely applied to practical living. The idea that the Man Christ Jesus has absolute and final authority over the whole church and over all of its members in ever detail of their lives is simply not now accepted as true by the rank and file of evangelical Christians.

What we do is this: We accept the Christianity of our group as being identical with that of Christ and His apostles. The beliefs, the practices, the ethics, the activities of our group are equated with the Christianity of the New Testament. Whatever the group thinks or says or does is scriptural, no



JULY — AUGUST, 1963

questions asked. It is assumed that all our Lord expects of us is that we busy ourselves with the activities of the group. In so doing we are keeping the commandments of Christ.

To avoid the harsh necessity of either obeying or rejecting the plain instructions of our Lord in the New Testament we take refuge in a liberal interpretation of them. Casuistry is not the possession of Roman Catholic theologians alone. We evangelicals also know how to avoid the sharp point of obedience by means of fine and intricate explanations. These are tailor-made for the flesh. They excuse disobedience, comfort carnality and make the words of Christ of none effect. And the essence of it all is that Christ simply could not have meant what He said. His teachings are accepted even theoretically only after they have been weakened by interpretation.

Yet Christ is consulted by increasing numbers of persons with "problems" and sought after by those who long for peace of mind. He is widely recommended as a kind of spiritual psychiatrist with remarkable powers to straighten people out. He is able to deliver them from their guilt complexes and to help them to avoid serious psychic traumas by making smooth and easy adjustment to society and their own ids. Of course this strange Christ has no relation whatever to the Christ of the New Testament. The true Christ is also Lord, but this accommodating Christ is little more than the servant of the people.

But I suppose I should offer some concrete proof to support my charge that Christ has little or no authority today among the churches. Well, let me put a few questions and let the answers be the evidence.

What church board consults our Lord's words to decide matters under discussion? Let anyone reading this who has had experience on a church board try to recall the times or time when any board member read from the Scriptures to make a point, or when any chairman suggested that the brethren should see what instructions the Lord had for them on a particular question. Board meetings are habitually opened with a formal prayer or "a season of prayer"; after that the Head of the church is respectfully silent while the real rulers of the church take over. Let anyone who denies this bring forth evidence to refute it. I for one will be glad to hear it.

What Sunday school committee goes to the Word for directions? Do not the members invariably assume that they already know what they are supposed to do and that their only problem is to find

effective means to get it done? Plans, rules, "operations" and new methodological techniques absorb all their time and attention. The prayer before the meeting is for divine help to carry out their plans. Apparently the idea that the Lord might have some instructions for them never so much as enters their heads.

Who remembers when a conference chairman brought his Bible to the table with him for the purpose of using it? Minutes, regulations, rules of order, yes. The sacred commandments of the Lord, no. An absolute dichotomy exists between the devotional period and the business session. The first has no relation to the second.

What foreign mission board actually seeks to follow the guidance of the Lord as provided by His Word and His Spirit? They all think they do, but what they do in fact is to assume the scripturalness of their ends and then ask for help to find ways to achieve them. They may pray all night for God to give success to their enterprises, but Christ is desired as their helper, not as their Lord. Human means are devised to achieve ends assumed to be divine. These harden into policy, and thereafter the Lord doesn't even have a vote.

In the conduct of our public worship where is the authority of Christ to be found? The truth is that today the Lord rarely controls a service, and the influence He exerts is very small. We sing of Him and preach about Him, but He must not interfere; we worship our way, and it must be right because we have always done it that way, as have the other churches in our group.

What Christian when faced with a moral problem goes straight to the Sermon on the Mount or other New Testament Scripture for the authoritative answer? Who lets the words of Christ be final on giving . . . the bringing up of a family, personal habits, tithing, entertainment, buying, selling and other such important matters?

What theological school, from the lowly Bible institute up, could continue to operate if it were to make Christ Lord of its every policy? There may be some, and I hope there are, but I believe I am right when I say that most such schools to stay in business are forced to adopt procedures which find no justification in the Bible they profess to teach. So we have this strange anomaly: the authority of Christ is ignored in order to maintain a school to teach among other things the authority of Christ.

The causes back of the decline in our Lord's authority are many. I name only two.

One is the power of custom, precedent and

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

tradition within the older religious groups. These like gravitation affect every particle of religious practice within the group, exerting a steady and constant pressure in one direction. Of course that direction is toward conformity to the status quo. Not Christ but custom is lord in this situation. And the same thing has passed over (possibly to a slightly lesser degree) into the other groups such as the full gospel tabernacles, the holiness churches and the many independent and undenominational churches found everywhere . . .

For the true Christian the one supreme test for the present soundness and ultimate worth of everything religious must be the place our Lord occupies in it. Is He Lord or symbol? Is He in charge of the project or merely one of the crew? Does He decide things or only help to carry out the plans of others? All religious activities from the simplest act of the individual Christian to the ponderous and expensive operation of a whole denomination

may be proved by the answer to the question, Is Jesus Christ Lord in this act? Whether our works prove to be wood, hay and stubble or gold and silver and precious stones in that great day will depend upon the right answer to that question.

What then are we to do? Each one of us must decide, and there are at least three possible choices. One is to rise up in shocked indignation and accuse me of irresponsible reporting. Another is to nod general agreement with what is written here but take comfort in the fact that there are exceptions and we are among the exceptions. The other is to go down in meek humility and confess that we have grieved the Spirit and dishonored our Lord in failing to give Him the place His Father has given Him as Head and Lord of the church. Either the first or the second will but confirm the wrong. The third if carried out to its conclusion can remove the curse. The decision lies with us.

Dr A. W. T.

## THE RISE, THE NOON, THE SUNDOWN OF A GREAT CHURCH

*Acts xix ; xx. II Timothy. Revelation ii. 1 - 5.*

**L**IKE the glory of a radiant morn, full of promise and blessed portent: like the power, the wealth, the beneficence of noontide, like the passing of a glorious day, the gathering shadows, the fast-approaching night, the sense of decline, loss, and failure; is the story of 'Ephesus' as we have it in the New Testament. It is a story, historically, of abounding promise; of abundant wealth; and of ultimate tragedy.

### THE RADIANT MORN

The story of that glorious beginning is told in Acts xix and xx. 17 - 38.

First, it is the story of a small beginning with a few disciples, who, having had imperfect instruction and limited light, made a full-hearted response to further enlightenment, and took their stand on the full meaning of the Cross as signified by baptism—death, burial, resurrection in Christ, and the consequent government of the Holy Spirit.

Then it is the inevitable and invariable story of the uprising of the powers of evil and of intense conflict: a real baptism into heavenly warfare and the sufferings of Christ. It was the reaction of "the world rulers of this darkness" against the invasion of their territory by Jesus Christ. Through this con-

flict the testimony was established and the church grew strong.

Thirdly, it is the story of an extended period of building up, instruction, during which time the spiritual values spontaneously became extra-local and "all Asia heard the word". The true nature of the Church universal became the nature of the church local; not by organized design, not by committee, machinery, and institutions, but by spontaneous and overflowing spiritual life.

Fourthly, it is the faithful reiteration of all that had been done and imparted at great cost, through much travail, and uncompromising loyalty to Christ and the truth. A final note of prophetic warning closed that epoch; warning that, if the enemy's fierce and vicious assaults from the outside failed to break that church, its testimony, and its far-reaching influence, he would turn to the inside and "from among your own selves shall men arise . . . to draw away the disciples after them" (Acts xx. 30).

All that makes up to a wonderful and heart-ravishing beginning. How vital and significant a beginning it is! Would that every local church had such a clear-cut and transparent beginning! It was of God, not of man. It was wholly of the Spirit, and not of the flesh. It was of Heaven and not only on

earthly ground. Therefore it had all the features of a heavenly calling; there was a heavenly fulness which spontaneously overflowed to distant regions, and a heavenly power which—while things remained true—triumphed over the many-sided insidious assaults of men and evil powers

While it remained on heavenly ground, Heaven supported it. That it did survive for so long and exercised such a great influence is attributable to the soundness of the beginning.

### THE NOON

Although we should, perhaps, let the latter part of what we have written overlap into this second phase, we feel that the full blaze of the noon-time of the significance of 'Ephesus' is to be seen in the Letter to which its name (probably with others) was attached. Paul was then in prison in Rome. In the sovereignty of God he had been cut off from actual travelling among the churches in person, and from all those activities which, although ever vital and important, must now give place to a new phase.

The Lord who ruled all things in the life of His servant, acting on the principle of *comparative* values, judged that the *greatest* purpose would be served by shutting His servant away in seclusion, at least for a time. So, to the prison in Rome he went, despite every evil effort to end his life on the way. How fully and perfectly the wisdom of God has been vindicated!

Since "the heavenly vision" broke upon him on the road to Damascus, over a period of approximately twenty-eight to thirty years, that vision had been steadily and unceasingly growing in meaning and significance. It had been added to by special visions and revelations of the Lord (II Cor. xii. 1), in meditation, thought, and experience; in many long journeys on foot, and by sea. Much as he had given in letters, there remained a vast residue stored up in his heart, which demanded quiet detachment and freedom from administrative responsibilities for its release. So, the Lord planned it. What a mighty debt the Church universal through all the subsequent centuries owes to that act of Divine wisdom and sovereignty!

We do not hesitate to say that the greatest document ever penned and given to men is what is called "The Letter to the Ephesians". (We know the contention that it was an encyclical, and that 'Ephesus' was filled into a vacant space left for various other places, and we have no quarrel with that conclusion.) For Ephesus it certainly was intended and that fact carries with it certain implications.

Firstly. It is a well-attested fact, known to all preachers and teachers who fulfil their ministry in the Spirit, that the measure of liberty and the degree of 'utterance' depend upon the capacity of the recipients. Jesus enunciated this fact when He said: "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now" (John xvi. 12), and it is stated categorically in Hebrews v. 11. The limit is imposed by the immaturity, the arrested growth, or lack of spiritual life in the hearers. A servant of the Lord, *speaking in the Spirit*, will know when he can go no further, and to try to go on will result in loss of unction and help. It is as though the Spirit said, 'That is as far as I can go with these people, they cannot take any more.' On the other hand, what a thing it is when there is no such restraint, and it is possible to give all that you have because the people are just drawing it out and are unwearied!

This is evidently how it was with those to whom this Letter was written. The Apostle was able to pour out the pent-up stores of heavenly riches. His only handicap was language, Superlative is heaped upon superlative. He beggars language and sometimes ruins grammar in his effort to free himself of his burden. There is nothing so profound; nothing so glorious; and nothing so significant for the Church as is here contained—or released!

Those believers must have been in a healthy spiritual state to receive all that. Paul must have felt how free that state made him, to so open the 'heavenlies'—a word so characteristic of the Letter.

A company of Christians will get what they are ready for. The Lord has vast stores and He is only straitened in us. One of the saddest things said about Israel was: "He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul" (Ps. cvi. 15). An attitude and condition of heart will determine 'leanness' or plenty.

Secondly. It was not only the *measure* of what could be given, it was also the nature. Not in volume alone is value to be found. Volume could result in surfeit and oppression. Neither is it in the words or statements as such. The people to whom this letter was sent had not just developed an ability to take large assignments of wonderful ideas.

There was that in the ministry which corresponded to the phrase of the Psalmist—"Deep calleth unto deep". They had discernment born of hunger and necessity, and they detected that this was very *life*. Because of a condition it *was* life to them.

There are things in this Letter which have



## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

divided people ever and always into three classes. There are those who have no spiritual life at all and their reaction is just to give it all up as quite beyond understanding and mysterious. Then there are the 'intellectuals' and the theologians, who have resolved the content into differing 'schools' of doctrine and interpretation. It is all so cold and dead: or it leads nowhere when the heart is breaking for some heavenly light; it is Dead-Sea fruit; dust and ashes; a headache and a weariness.

But, there are those who really have "a spirit of wisdom and revelation"; and 'the anointing' abiding within; who know an open Heaven because the Cross has broken the natural barriers. To them it is the *nature*, the essence, the heavenly light; the Divine potency, and the heart-ravishing blessing of what is *revealed*, rather than the *ideas* and concepts. The believers at Ephesus were evidently like that. At least, there were a sufficient number of such there.

There was another factor already hinted at, which should be underlined. Those believers had suffered, and were suffering. Their *condition* made it absolutely essential that they had more than a nominal and ordinary resource. Yes, it was a *necessity*. They were hungry. They were up against the forces of evil. They *consciously* needed succour in the battle. The traditional religion had failed them. Spiritual food was hard to come by.

The vast deposit which God gave to people in such conditions and under such circumstances will only come to vitality again when, for some cause or reason, it again becomes a matter of life or death; of *living* light or we perish!

## SUNDOWN

What a pity that we cannot leave the story there. But, sad to say, the *record* ends with 'the radiant morn hath passed away, and spent too soon her golden store'.

We combine two Scriptures:—

"This thou knowest that all they which be in Asia turned away from me" (II Timothy i. 15);

"To the church in Ephesus . . . I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love. Remember therefore whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works; or else I . . . will move thy candlestick out of its place" (Revelation ii. 1). "Left thy first love". "From whence thou art fallen". "Thy candlestick out of its place".

If, as is generally believed, Paul wrote the Letter during his first imprisonment, and was released for about four years, and then wrote to Timothy during

the second and last imprisonment, it must have been during those four years that the tragedy in Ephesus began. The whole tone has changed, the whole level declined. "All they which be in Asia be turned from me". Timothy had responsibility in Ephesus. We have only to read the Second Letter to him to see what had happened and was happening in Asia. It is a tragic story.

There are some things to draw from it.

Firstly. How quickly can a whole situation change, and how great the 'fall' can be when—*on the inside*—policy takes the place of principle; personal assertiveness thrusts spiritual government aside (there are a number of personal names mentioned with discredit in this Letter); when spirituality in order, 'office', and procedure is made to give place to organization, earthly orders, and a technical system. Either Paul's reproach and ostracism, his discrediting and threatening execution was too much for these people *now*, and so they turned from him; or his standard was *now* too high and exacting for them and they had developed a spiritual inferiority complex; perhaps it was some of both; but by 'fallen' the Lord meant dropped on to a lower level.

And the characteristics? lost first—original and virgin—love; and forsaken "first works", the former expressions of early and primal vision.

It is something to be thought over that, in addressing Ephesus, the Lord said: "I know thy works and thy toil and thy patience", and then should charge them to do the "first works". He did not charge them with having no works or toil, but with departing from their *first* works.

Secondly. It is possible to 'turn from' the Lord's vessel and repudiate what He had given, but it is not thereby possible to get away from the Lord.

Paul is gone—about A.D. 64. John most probably wrote the book of the Revelation twenty years—or so—later. In that time the decline had become so great that the Lord seriously raised the question of the justification of the continuance of the Lampstand—the vessel of the Testimony. Of course, it is possible that the elements of this declension were present in Paul's lifetime and that apart from Alexander the Coppersmith they were suppressed. The Lord may have removed Paul because He knew this, for He does not believe in suppression. What is present will, sooner or later, be given an opportunity to manifest itself in order to be judged. Be that as it may, what is of God cannot be set aside by man without an encounter with God in His chosen time.

It will be a certain encouragement to all faithful

JULY — AUGUST, 1963

servants of the Lord to know that time is God's ally, and that 'their labour is not in vain in the Lord' whether they see it in their lifetime or not.

We come then to the final word. It is not Ephesus or any other place or thing *as such* that the Lord sets Himself to keep intact. The world is covered with places and institutions which once were scenes of His glory, power and use, but to-

day are shells or shadows of that former glory. God is not so concerned with the means as He is with the spiritual values which eternity will reveal. It is *people* who are His concern, and people of spiritual measure undiminished by time. It is—ultimately—the measure of the gold of Christ as symbolized by the Candlestick.

T. A-S.

## WHY ARE YOU HERE ?

*"... and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?" (1 Kings xix. 12, 13).*

**T**O some people it may be surprising to realise that God knows our name and our whereabouts. It was no surprise to Elijah. His history had been one of a very close walk with God. In Horeb, more perhaps than anywhere else, he could expect to have a heart-to-heart interview with his Lord. And this was just what he had come for.

In putting this question, God was not accusing him of being in some unholy place, as though outraged that He should discover Elijah there. He could hardly accuse His servant of being in the wrong place, since it was His own intervention and miraculous sustaining which had made it possible for Elijah to complete the 40 days' journey. No, God was not blaming him for being there, but enquiring the reason why he had come. It was as though He was really asking the prophet, 'What do you want, Elijah?' 'Why are you here?'

Why was he there? Because he had reached the limit of what he could bear. "It is enough", he had protested as he threw himself down under the juniper tree. Those of us who have never passed through a similar experience will not understand his despair. Some may even be critical at his expense. But those who have reached the end of their tether, not through self-will, but in an honest attempt to give of their best for God, will appreciate how bitter Elijah's soul must have felt.

As we have said, it was a Divine intervention which had rescued him at his lowest ebb, and it was only with God's help that he had reached Horeb at all—"And he arose and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb, the mount of God" (v. 8). Now he had arrived, and God had met

him, to ask what it was all about, and what were the deep emotions which had brought him away in this fashion, to leave everything in order to have this period of re-examination.

He probably had no human counsellor, but in any case it was his wisdom to seek God's face and to pour out his complaint to the only one able to understand and help. It is always wisdom for the harassed and perplexed servant of God to get alone with the Lord about it all. 'What are you doing?' God asked Elijah. There was a sense in which Elijah wished to ask God what *He* was doing. He did ask this, and he got the answer; not in explanations (the Lord rarely explains Himself to us) but in new assurance and re-commission.

## PERPLEXITY ABOUT GOD'S FAILURE TO ANSWER PRAYER

If we ask what were the motives which took Elijah to Horeb, the first would probably be that he was puzzled to have no answer to his prayers.

When Elijah first began to serve the living God, he doubtless found that there was an almost instantaneous response to every request which he made. 'I have proved God answers prayer.' How true this is, and how thrilling! Sooner or later, however, those who make that assertion are forced back to the first statement, 'I believe God answers prayer'. Do you? Are you sure?

The prophet was now undergoing this test. He, more than any other, was the man who became famous for getting answers to his prayers. He had prayed for a drought, and it came. He prayed for rain, for fire, even for life from the dead, and his every prayer was answered. This must have been a wonderful cheer to him. It is always a source of deep joy to us when we see the Lord at work in answer to our prayers. Yet all those answers may well have made the perplexity all the greater when God did not answer. This was Elijah's present complaint, and it may well be ours.

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

We are not sure whether he blamed himself. The anguished confession that he was not better than his fathers could possibly mean this. Deep down, however, he would know that this was not the true explanation. It is a shock to us when we discover that there is a hold-up in God's working because there is something wrong on our part which needs to be confessed and corrected. It is a shock, but it is hardly a mystery. If anything, the mystery is that He can ever hear and answer prayer from people as unworthy as we. No, the problem arises from deeper sources than this.

Elijah had comparatively little interest in the withholding or giving of rain, as such, for his real objective was that the heart of the people might be turned back to God. He was out for spiritual recovery. For a moment, there on Mount Carmel, it had seemed to have happened. He was so elated that he could gather up his garments and run ahead of Ahab's chariot with the hand of the Lord upon him. Soon, however, the messenger had arrived from Jezebel which made it clear that she was still in control. And with Jezebel on the throne, there seemed no hope of spiritual recovery. Perhaps it made all the other answers to prayer seem rather a mockery when the one prayer which really mattered was still left without an answer.

We can never explain the ways of God. In this case, though, it does seem that the time-factor was of great significance: "And it shall come to pass . . ." (v. 17). This was God's promise to Elijah, a promise which made it clear that He Himself was working steadily on with His plans, and only asked that Elijah should trust Him and go quietly on. God does not always answer when we think that He should. Elijah had shown more than usual patience in his work as a prophet, but even he found it extremely hard to wait for God's moment to come. Yet wait we must, not in fatalism but in faith.

## DISAPPOINTMENT AT THE SEEMING FAILURE OF HIS OWN LIFE

"I am no better than my fathers", he had complained, as he sat in despair under the juniper tree. It was as though he had been sure that whereas others had failed, he would succeed; he was confident that his life would not end in frustration but in fulfilment.

There are few more poignant experiences than to realise that most of one's life has gone beyond recall without any lasting achievement. This may be due to one's own folly or weakness. Many sin-

cere servants of the Lord have failed to make good because of their yielding to some subtle temptation. It is difficult to know what can be said in comfort of such, except that it is always right to hope in God's mercy.

In Elijah's case, however, it was no fault of his own, for he had been a devoted and faithful servant of God. It may be that he had explained the failures of his 'fathers' by attributing to them a lack of devotion, determining that he would never fail in this respect, but would be utter in his pursuit of the will of God. Yet the strange thing was that in spite of this, he could see no lasting value in his life's work. "I have been very jealous for the Lord", he said twice over. Nevertheless, although this was an honest claim, he felt that his life had been a failure.

Elijah was not unique in this respect. The great prophet Isaiah later spoke of the Lord's servant having to confess, "But I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and vanity" (Isaiah xlix. 4). It is a fact that many ordinary Christians, who neither expected nor wished to be prominent in God's service, have their moments when they feel that their lives have been wasted. They may be inclined to blame others for this. Perhaps there is a hint of such a tendency in Elijah's complaint that he alone had remained true to God. To do this is to give way to the same bitterness of spirit which nearly destroyed Elijah. It may be argued that our course would have been so different if our fellow Christians had behaved otherwise; it may be true that their bad example, their interference or their lack of support, have produced unnecessary complications for us; it may even be that through their jealousy or mistaken zeal, other Christians have deliberately set out to break us; yet in the last issue we are God's servants, and our life-work is His responsibility.

It is notable that the Lord made no direct reference to this complaint of His servant. He almost seemed to accept Elijah's request to end his ministry by advising him to anoint Elisha as his successor. God will never pander to our self-pity. He is full of sympathetic understanding. The scene under the juniper gave proof of that, for God asked no questions and gave no commands except that His servant should rest and refresh himself.

When the tension was over, however, He demanded of Elijah, "What doest thou here?" and then gave him his marching orders: "Go, return on thy way . . ."

Of course Elijah's life had not been a failure. And there was still more to come. Things had not



JULY — AUGUST, 1963

worked out as he had expected. They seldom do. But his glorious ascent to Heaven when at last his earthly career was completed, shows the Divine verdict on his life. What would Elijah have thought about his so-called frustrated life if he could have glimpsed the scene on a nearby mountain many centuries later, when he was privileged, with Moses, to see something of the glory of God's Son.

The great thing is to keep our eyes on the Lord's interests rather than on our own. "Elisha, the son of Shaphat of Abel-Meholah, shalt thou anoint to be prophet *in thy room*" (v. 16) was a definite promise that after Elijah had gone, the work would still go on. Never mind whether you are a failure or not, Elijah, so long as the work of God goes on!

It was a proof of Elijah's greatness that he so promptly accepted God's will and cast his mantle on Elisha. Moses himself had been subjected to a similar test, and had emerged with the greatest credit when he layed his hands on Joshua. In the New Testament, Paul urged Timothy to do the same, ". . . the things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (II Tim. ii. 2). Such men can never be failures.

### LONELINESS DUE TO THE FAILURE OF OTHERS

Loneliness is a very real hardship. Elijah's statement that he alone was left, suggests that there may have formerly been other fellow-workers who had not remained, either because of violence or their own defection. It was not good for him to be left alone. Perhaps that is why Elisha was immediately provided as a companion.

There are two kinds of loneliness, one being a genuine lack of companionship for the sake of the truth, and the other an unnecessary imagining that there is no one to stand with us. In a sense, both of these were true of Elijah.

In his three years of hiding, and in his courageous stand on Mount Carmel, Elijah had been alone. This was no fault of his. It was a condition forced on him by circumstances. Such inevitable loneliness is still the lot of some of God's children and is sometimes due to the stand which they have taken for the Lord. Like Elijah, they continue pluckily through many trials, but sometimes, like him, they reach the point where they feel that they can bear it no more. It was this intolerable sense of being alone which had driven Elijah to Horeb. God listened patiently to Elijah's complaint, and sent

him off to have the deficiency repaired. "So he departed thence, and found Elisha . . ." (v. 19).

But from another viewpoint, this sense of being alone was not accepted by the Lord. In effect, he told Elijah that the aloneness was imaginary for He still had 7,000 other faithful worshippers in Israel. This 'answer of God' is commented on in Romans xi. 4, with the assertion that the same truth is valid at this present time. It is dangerous to imagine that we alone are standing for the rights of God. For one thing it is not true, and also the effect of such an idea is to give us a false sense of our own importance. This, interestingly enough, was God's last word to Elijah at Horeb, and it seems to have had the desired effect, for after this the prophet went on his way. Out there in the strain of life, surrounded and harrassed by many foes, he had built up in his own mind a distorted sense of isolation. It only needed the occasion of a great disappointment to turn this vague feeling into a strong conviction, almost an obsession. How could he be freed from such an unhealthy sense of grievance?

The answer, of course, was Horeb, the place where he heard "the sound of gentle stillness" (v. 12, R.V.M.). In the wind, the earthquake and the fire, Elijah still felt himself alone, and cowered in his cave. When, however, he heard the still, small voice, he knew that God was there and that he could go out and talk frankly with Him. As usual, God gave very little explanation, but He listened, for God is a good listener. Then he made Elijah aware that things were not what they seemed, showing him that what he needed was to recover his simple trust in the absolute power of God and then to go back again into the fight.

### HIDDEN FEAR

If Elijah's difficulties were to be summed up in one word, that word would have been 'fear'. We are told that this was his motive for running away from the situation in the first place, "And he was afraid, and arose and went for his life . . ." (v. 3, R.V.M.). Fear is a far more common emotion than is realised, and a far more potent factor in men's behaviour than they will acknowledge.

It comes as a surprise to us that the bold Elijah should be accused of fear. It seems even more surprising when we find that his first request to God was that he might be allowed to die. Far from trying to avoid death, he seems to have wanted to die. Well, even the strongest of us fails at times, and surprisingly enough, fails at the point of greatest

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

strength. So we must not be too hard on Elijah.

There is, however, a far more subtle fear than timidity. It is the fear that the Lord is inadequate. For the moment it looked to Elijah that Baal, or Ahab, or Jezebel was too strong for his Lord, that the Lord was inadequate in the face of such strong opposition. He would never have put this into words, yet this kind of fear that things have got out of hand—or may do so—often produces rash behaviour, weakness or gloom among God's people. Even if Elijah had failed, that was no reason to fear that God would do so too. Or if—as Elijah probably felt—the people of God had failed, this was no reason for despair, as though God were not quite able to keep things in His hand. One can cover this inner fear for God by pious reminders of how very jealous we have been for His Name, but fear is still fear, and it is at its worst when it doubts the Lord's ability to safeguard His own interests. Never mind what you have done, the Lord seemed to say, and never mind what 'they' have done or are trying to do, the important thing is what I have done and am doing. "I have left for myself . . ." (Romans xi. 4), or alternatively, "Yet will I . . ." (v. 18). Why not desist from questionings and arguments, and simply rely on the Divine "I will" ?

## BACK INTO THE BATTLE

The Lord had nothing more to say. With this

last "I will" He gave Elijah his marching orders. It may be permissible, it may even be right, to withdraw into your cave and to voice your perplexities. It is wrong, though, to stay in that cave. "Go, return . . ."

This seems to have been enough for Elijah. Although his return meant a long, wilderness journey, he went right back and took up his ministry again where he had laid it down. There were already too many people standing back, waiting to see how things would go, and promising themselves that when they saw the Lord at work, they would cooperate. It is not in this way that God's end is reached. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God". We must leave our problems with Him. ". . . but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children . . . that we may do . . ." (Deut. xix. 29). It had been shown to Elijah what God wanted him to do—to get back into the battle—and happily he obeyed. Horeb was good. The cave may have been necessary. But now God had said, "I will", so Elijah left them both to show his trust by simple obedience. "So he departed thence . . ." (v. 19).

There may well be lessons for us in this story of God's servant. It is certain that for us, even more than for him, the end which God has in view is our translation to glory. Meanwhile we need to trust and not be afraid.

H. F.

## LEADERSHIP

## CHAPTER FIVE

GIDEON (*Judges vi.*)

IN one of his concise and terse messages, speaking of Leaders and Followers, Dr A. W. Tozer said:

"When our Lord called us all sheep, He told us that we should be followers; and when Peter called some shepherds, he indicated that there should be among us leaders as well as followers. Human nature being what it is, the need for leadership is imperative. Let five men be cast adrift in a lifeboat, and immediately one of them assumes command. No plebiscite is necessary. Four of the men will know by a kind of intuition who the leader is, and without any formality he will take that place. Every disaster, every fire, every flood, elects its own leaders. In retrospect the weaker ones may find fault; but they were glad enough for the leadership when the crisis was on. Among Christ-

ians, too, there are leaders and followers. The followers may resent the leader, but they need him nevertheless. In the Church there must be leaders; but the leader must also be a follower. Paul gave us the pattern when he exhorted the Corinthians: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (I Cor. xi. 1)."

If, then, leadership is both Scriptural and necessary, it is well that we get to know from the Scriptures what leadership really is and what makes it. So we proceed to another valuable and instructive example, and find here some features and factors additional to those already noted. Gideon indeed has some helpful and vital things to teach us in this connection.

It is not without importance to note that Gideon had no official position in Israel. He became

leader because he had the spirit of a leader. Several details which composed this leadership-spirit are evident. Let us note them:

(1) Gideon was characterized by a spirit of responsibility. The times were times of straitness, weakness, and poverty. The enemy was depriving the Lord's people of their bread, their means of sustenance. There was vigilant alertness on the part of the enemy, and it was a perilous thing for anyone to counter his strategy of starvation; for weakness was a great ally of his purpose to suppress. Both courage and wisdom were required in any attempt to subvert the enemy's plan. This whole story shows how few there were who really were ready to pay the price; in other words, how few there were with an adequate sense of responsibility. Of those few, Gideon was chief. He had a sense of responsibility for the Lord's people and their great need; a sense of responsibility for the Lord's honour. The sense of shame and reproach; this sense of jealousy and indignation; this sense of things not being as they ought to be, moved Gideon to action—dangerous action. His whole course to find victory was inspired by a spirit of responsibility which demanded dangerous action.

The first phase was his action of beating out wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites. Here was exercise in secret to meet vital need. The true leader is not always the one who ostentatiously parades himself in public. *Gideon was not thinking of leadership.* His action behind the scenes was not a subtle, veiled bit of policy or diplomacy by which he would have control and gratify an equally secret desire for power. It was just an act of disinterested, unselfish concern, prompted by a lofty purpose and largeness of heart. The food question is acute and the people just must be fed, whatever the cost to oneself. That is where leadership begins, in the hidden history of the one concerned. It is to be noted that the eye of the Lord was upon the secret life and exercise. "The Lord sent a prophet unto the children of Israel" (verse 8), but "the angel of the Lord" came to Gideon. (Was this one of the many theophanies—appearances of God Himself in man-form—recorded in Scripture? Verse 23 would imply this.)

The Lord knew where Gideon was, what he was doing, and why he was doing it. The Lord<sup>5</sup>knew that Gideon was discerning the works of the enemy and doing what he could to counter them. There was not much that he could do, and practically nothing *in public*—a very testing situation; but he was being faithful in that which was least.

Gideon passed the first phase of the test for

leadership without ambition for it; the test of faithfulness, responsibility, and selflessness in secret.

(2) The test of humility.

The second characteristic of great account with God is humility. Responsibility was being thrust upon him without his ever having manoeuvred, schemed, worked, or used any force to get it. Indeed, the record would indicate that leadership was something not desired by Gideon.

Says Dr Tozer: "I believe that it might be accepted as a fairly reliable rule-of-thumb that the man who is ambitious for leadership is disqualified from it."

To the amazing declaration and command of "the angel", Gideon could only reply: "... my family is the poorest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house". His excusable trepidation is displayed in his request for the tokens; easily understood in the presence of so immense a responsibility. It is all the revealing of how little the man had confidence in himself. He passed that second stage in the test.

(3) The test of the home-base.

A further test of fitness for leadership had to be passed before Gideon could move out to the task. It was what we can call the home-base. Things were not right at home. There was compromise there. There was mixture there. The enemy had a foothold there. In the home, in the family, in the background there was that which would have put him in a false position and have completely sabotaged his campaign. He could not win on the field if the enemy held the stronghold behind. In other words, there could be no *true* testimony in the world and in the heavenlies, if the testimony was contradicted in the private life. However those there might resent, contend (see verses 31, 32) or fear, in the long-run all who knew him best had to be compelled to say that, what he was in public, he was at home and in private. How much more could be written in there, but, with the Lord, and with the ultimate issue, this 'home-base' factor is vital.

(4) The sufficiency of the Lord.

It was indeed a testing way by which the Lord led Gideon to leadership. The man well knew his own lack of qualification and ability. Like David he was the least in his father's house, and, no doubt, despised by his bigger and—according to the world's standard—more important brothers. But his course under the hand of the Lord was one of continuous and progressive reduction. Elimination and sifting out reduced his resources to a minimum. The Lord was stringently applying the



## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

precaution 'lest'. Lest Gideon should feel; lest Israel should say: By my own power, by our own sufficiency we triumphed.

Gideon does not seem to have disagreed or argued with the Lord. The leaders of the world want plenty of room and plenty of means. Gideon agreed that God was enough. He agreed with God's wisdom and judgment that a small company of solid value is better than a great multitude of divided heart.

There, then, are the factors which constitute a leadership which has the right to say: "Look on me and do likewise." The leader must be spiritually

all that he wants others to be. He must be spiritually ahead of those whom he would lead. Were we considering the whole episode we should mention a number of other things, but we are only concerned with the matter of leadership as it relates to the leader: not to his strategy, which is very instructive in Gideon's case: not to the incidents of the assault.

Other things will come up in other instances, but here we can set a high value upon those four features mentioned, because they were the things to which God committed Himself.

T. A-S.

## FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

## THE TEAM SPIRIT

**M**OST people seem to like Brazil nuts. Years ago, when I travelled in the Pará region of Brazil, I not only saw bunkers of these nuts stacked by the riverside to await collection, but I also saw the nuts just as they are when they first fall from the trees. A number of the smaller nuts (as we know them) are packed tight together in a hard outer shell, which has been described as looking like a rusty cannon-ball. I must say that it appears to be almost as hard as a cannon-ball too. It is this tight packing together in the outer casing which gives the nuts their flat shapes and sharp edges. The outer nut, though, is smooth and rounded.

As the Brazil nut trees are very tall, those who gather the nuts have to wait until these large shells fall to the ground. The nut hangs by a stalk, so that when it drops there is a small hole at the top, where the stalk was. This hole is very important, though I did not realise this when I was out there.

I had always thought that these outer cases either broke open when they fell or else rotted and fell apart, so that the nuts could fall out, scatter around and finally each take root and produce a new tree. However, I was wrong. The only place from which the shoot of the new tree can come is the little stalk-hole at the top.

It is my old friend, Mr Horace Banner, who was my companion in missionary work and who after these years still works among the forest Red Indians, who has written to say what really happens after the large nut has fallen to the ground. He learnt by experience, for he planted one in his garden.

"It sprouted after being planted there for two years. The little green shoot was promptly pecked

off by a hungry hen, but it grew again. Curious to see what was happening, he opened the heavy outer shell with a hacksaw. Although only one shoot had been able to squeeze through the tiny stalk-hole, there were more than a dozen other sprouting nuts inside.

"Each one was a potential tree, but without any means of getting out. Now in spite of that shell's two years in the ground it showed no signs of rotting, and he found himself wondering how long the young tree would have to wait before its roots could push through Mother Earth. And however could it last out till then?"

"As the days went by—and rarely a day passed without a peep into that shell—the answer became clear. The nuts which had no chance of ever becoming trees were teaming up in support of the one which had been successful. Their little roots and shoots went round and round each other, until they became one fibrous mass, with the new tree in the middle.

"One day—if all went well—that tree would be a wonderful sight, tall and strong as a chimneystack, and giving nuts in profusion every year for a century. But for the time being its very existence depended on a team of other nuts, hidden away and content to wear themselves out in the obscurity of the shell."

In the end, of course, the hard outer shell rots and then the tree roots are free to go down deep into the earth. The work of the others is then over; they have given up their own lives to support the one nut which produces the tree. They have no more existence, but they have lived to some purpose and will really live on in the tree

JULY — AUGUST, 1963

which towers up in the forest. The roots of the growing plant were able to fasten on them and feed on them at a time when they had no other source of supply.

There is a verse in the New Testament which says: "We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (I John 3. 16). That is just what these nuts do. They do not die in the sense of refusing to live or stopping all effort. No, they do not just remain passive; they live, but in doing so they lay down their lives for the other. They are not content to waste away in vain, but put out their roots and shoots, not for themselves, but to offer their life freely for the sustaining and nourishment of the new tree.

We, too, are not asked to die for one another in the sense of ceasing from all effort and staying idle. That is not the right sort of death. We are told that we ought to live, but as we do so, we ought to lay down those lives for the help of others.

It is not easy to do what the nuts do. It means that our care for others and our sacrifice of ourselves may not be seen. We may feel that we are not appreciated. We may even feel that we are not needed. This, however, is quite untrue, for the Lord's testimony in this world is like the great tree, the tree which can only grow by the willingness of God's people to pour out their lives and their love in secret, for the good of their fellows and for the glory of God. We need the team spirit.

H. F.

## THE STEWARDSHIP OF THE MYSTERY

### CHAPTER SIX (continued)

#### "THE MYSTERY" IN THE LETTERS TO THE CORINTHIANS

**I**N the first of these two letters we have seen the 'Mystery' in relation to manhood in Christ. As "the last Adam" and "the second man" He connects specifically to the race, and is God's secret ("mystery") for securing the kind of man that God conceived when He said: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness". The first man was corrupted, *deformed*, and, like the potter's vessel of Jeremiah, rejected as the acceptable vessel, unto the making of "another vessel" pleasing to the Potter. Into the original concept God's Son stepped in man-form (Phil. ii. 7, 8) and is the "image" and "likeness" to which a new creation is to be "conformed" (Romans viii. 29).

In the light of this our last chapter should be read (or rather, the first part of this chapter). It requires a book to itself, and, if the Lord enables, such will be written.

In the deeper theme of 'God's Secret' the two Corinthian Letters are one in their particular aspect of this matter. The second takes up and carries "the mystery" on into larger connections. The first letter is largely personal and subjective. In the second letter we find 'God's Secret' as the interpretation of a wider range of symbolic activities. There are so many symbolic and typological allusions in these two letters which so evidently express the background of the Apostle's new understanding, lying behind the things actually mentioned. Let us tabulate some of these:—

We do not refer to the *much* larger number of Old Testament passages, but only to incidents and things.

"The Cloud". "The Sea". "The Manna". "The Rock". The Fall in the Wilderness I Cor. x. 1 - 5. The created universe—"Bodies celestial", "Bodies terrestrial"; "Sun, moon, stars". I Cor. xv. 40, 41.

"First man Adam". I Cor. xv. 45, 47 - 49.

The tables of the (old) Covenant" II Cor. iii. 3 - 11.

Moses and the face-veil. II Cor. iii. 12 - 16.

The fiat of light at creation. II Cor. iv. 6.

Gideon's earthen vessels with the lamps within. II Cor. iv. 7.

Perhaps the sign of Gideon's fleece II Cor. iv. 10 - 12.

The old creation. II Cor. v. 17.

The Tabernacle in the Wilderness. II Cor. vi. 16.

The Manna in the Wilderness. II Cor. viii. 15.

The temptation in the garden. II Cor. xi. 3.

What we are indicating by all this is that God—in His acts and ways—from creation onward, has had an underlying and hidden thought. Everything that has come from God in a temporal or material way has some spiritual thought or thoughts behind it, or concealed in it. It is intended to represent something that is in God's mind, which is deeper and more real than the means of representation. The means or method may be temporal,

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

but the thought and meaning are eternal. How vast a range of Divine revelation this touches! But, for our purpose here, we must refuse to be drawn out into this marvellous realm and concentrate on the focal point.

## THE FOCAL-POINT OF ALL REVELATION

Let us say at once, and, in the light of a vast amount of Scripture, that the sum of all the thoughts and interests of God the Father is His Son, now known to us as Jesus Christ. To have spiritual insight into all the allusions—mentioned or not mentioned above—is to see God moving with thoughts concerning His Son, and this *is* the insight which had come to Paul when he saw Jesus Christ—"It pleased God to reveal his Son in me" (Gal. i. 15).

Out from behind his great knowledge of the Old Testament, Paul was bringing the hidden and concealed Divine meaning concerning Jesus Christ. He had never seen all this—or any or it—before. Now, with his spiritual eyes opened, and "a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him" (Eph. i. 17, 18), he sees God's hidden secret, the 'Mystery' hidden from the ages, and the universe of Heaven and earth is opened to him. So great, breath-taking, and overwhelming is this that he can only ejaculate at times: "O, the depth of

the riches . . . !" "the unsearchable riches of Christ". For him, the Bible *lives*; the universe lives; and *all things* have a meaning. That meaning is Christ!

This is what Paul called his "stewardship"; his trust. Paul never had to sit down and think up or work up sermons. If he did reading, as he did, or in drawing upon his earlier reading, it was with this open Heaven over him (John i. 51) and this new faculty—his born-again spirit anointed by the Holy Spirit—seeing through and in, and beyond all things to God's thoughts concerning His Son. Oh, that we knew in large measure what there is to be known of history, astronomy, physiology, and so on, so that, given this spiritual faculty, we might read the thoughts of God in all His works and ways; His means and His methods; and see that Christ fills all things! How vast a Christ we should see Him to be!

This is "the Mystery"—'God's Secret', as in the Corinthian Letters, concerning which, Paul said that he was made a minister. We have only hinted at it, but we trust that the 'hint' draws aside the blinds and that we begin to see *something* of the profound and far-reaching meaning of a phrase which, without the opened eye, would be mysterious rather than a disclosed universe of Divine intention.

T. A-S.

---

 SPECIAL NOTE BY THE EDITOR.

IT has always been our desire to make the ministry through this little medium available to *all* of the Lord's people; not regarding it as our personal property. "Freely ye have received, freely give" has been our principle.

Where we have felt we could do so we have granted, on request, permission to reproduce messages in other magazines. But we have come up against a difficulty, and are finding ourselves being seriously misunderstood by some of our friends. The messages have been embodied in magazines which have a particular 'ism' which is of doubtful rightness, and sometimes, harmful influence.

We just want to say to all of our readers that while those who use these messages usually do so in sincerity and because they feel their spiritual value, it must not be concluded that we accept the particular teaching which these dear people propagate. In some cases we would strongly repudiate the interpretation. In some cases we have had to request that our name should not be associated with their teaching.

If you have any doubts, you can let us know, and we will do our best to answer any enquiry.



JULY — AUGUST, 1963

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We acknowledge with gratitude the following gifts received during April and May, 1963.

Airdrie 5s.; Amsterdam, Holland £1 ; Ardrishaig £1 ; Belfast 15s.; Boorhaman, Australia £5 ; Bristol 10s., £1 ; Buenos Aires, Argentina £1 ; Calabar, Nigeria £1 ; Chelmsford 6s.; Clacton-on-Sea 10s.; Claridge, South Africa £2 ; Copenhagen, Denmark £1, £1 ; Deal £1 ; Didsbury, Canada £3 5s. 7d.; Dublin 10s.; Eastbourne 4s., £1 1s.; Edinburgh 10s.; Findon 10s.; Gateshead £1 ; Glasgow 10s., £2 ; Greytown, South Africa £2 10s.; Grimsby 10s.; Harrow 5s.; Hastings 10s., £2, £5 ; Heathfield 10s.; Hove 10s.; Hull 7s. 6d.; Inverness 5s.; Kaleden, Canada £1 9s. 6d.; Lancing 6s.; Leamington £5 ; London, S.E.23—5s., 10s., 10s., 10s., £1, £2, £2, £3, £5, £5 ; S.W.4.—£2 ; W.4.—9s.; Lynmouth 10s.; Maidenhead 10s.; Neuchâtel, Switzerland 15s.; Newcastle-on-Tyne £2 ; Nürnberg, Germany 8s. 11d.; Port Jervis, New York £1 4s.; Romney Marsh £2 ; Soest, Holland £2 7s. 2d.; Southampton 10s.; South Shields 10s., 7s. 6d., 5s., 10s.; Stadel, Switzerland £1 ; Sunbury-on-Thames £1 ;

Tonna 5s.; Tunbridge Wells £1 ; Västra Frölunda, Sweden £1 ; West Drayton 5s.; West Medford, Massachusetts £3 10s. 11d.

Total £88 2s. 1d

Allentown, Pa. \$10 ; Birmingham, Ala. \$10 ; Brooklyn, N.J. \$3 ; Brunswick, Nebr. \$1 ; Corner Brook, Newfoundland \$5 ; Fort Jay, N.Y. \$6 ; Hebron, Maine \$10 ; Hutchinson Kansas \$10 ; Jamestown, N.Y. \$5 ; Kokomo, Ind. \$3 ; Kotagiri, India \$13.69 ; Lansdowne, Pa. \$15 ; Los Angeles, Calif. \$1 ; Lynchburg, Va. \$1 ; Montclair, N.J. \$10 ; Multan, W. Pakistan \$4 ; North Palm Springs, Calif. \$6 ; Price, Utah \$1.15 ; San Diego, Calif. \$10 ; Taipei, Formosa \$30

Total \$154.84

Agincourt, Ont. C.\$1.00 ; Stouffville, Ont. C.\$2.00

Total C.\$3.00

Nairobi, Kenya E.Afr. 100/-

Pontypool, Wales NZ£1. 0. 0.

Gümligen, Switzerland Sw.Frs. 50.-

---

## THE CONFERENCE IN SWITZERLAND

We want to ask our friends for special prayer over this time of gathering in Switzerland—6th to 16th September. With several weeks yet to go all the accommodation in the hotel has been booked for some time. We are doing our best to find sleeping accommodation in the locality, but, being earlier than last year, this may be more difficult. The Lord has always met our needs in past years, and, with the much larger company, can do so this year. But please pray much about this.

Mr SPARKS, who went to the United States in March, is still there, but hopes to be back well in time for Aeschi. Pray for his ministries and travelling.

## WITNESS AND TESTIMONY LITERATURE

---

*By T. A-S.*

GOD'S REACTIONS TO MAN'S DEFECTIONS . . . . .	7/- (\$1.50)
RIVERS OF LIVING WATER . . . . .	6/- (\$1.28)
PROPHETIC MINISTRY . . . . .	5/6 (\$1.18)
OUR WARFARE . . . . .	4/6 (\$0.96)
PIONEERS OF THE HEAVENLY WAY . . . . .	4/6 (\$0.96)
THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO PAUL . . . . .	4/6 (\$0.96)
WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CHRISTIAN . . . . .	4/6 (\$0.96)
FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE . . . . .	4/6 (\$0.96)
THE GOLD OF THE SANCTUARY . . . . .	4/- (\$0.85)
THE CENTRALITY AND UNIVERSALITY OF THE CROSS . . . . .	3/- (\$0.64)
WE BEHELD HIS GLORY (VOL. II) (cloth boards)	4/6 (\$0.96)
(Art paper covers)	3/6 (\$0.75)
THE BATTLE FOR LIFE . . . . .	2/6 (\$0.53)
GOD'S SPIRITUAL HOUSE . . . . .	1/6 (\$0.32)
THE WORK OF GOD AT THE BND TIME . . . . .	1/6 (\$0.32)
HIS GREAT LOVE . . . . .	1/6 (\$0.32)
THE SCHOOL OF CHRIST . . . . .	1/6 (\$0.32)
UNION WITH CHRIST . . . . .	1/6 (\$0.32)
GOD HATH SPOKEN . . . . .	1/- (\$0.21)
THE ULTIMATE ISSUE OF THE UNIVERSE . . . . .	9d (\$0.16)
THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT . . . . .	6d (\$0.11)
THE WATCHWORD OF THE SON OF MAN . . . . .	4d (\$0.07)
BETHANY . . . . .	3d (\$0.05)
THE SUPREME VOCATION . . . . .	3d (\$0.05)
CHRIST—ALL, AND IN ALL . . . . .	3d (\$0.05)
CHRIST IN HEAVEN AND CHRIST WITHIN . . . . .	2d (\$0.04)
THE ARM OF THE LORD . . . . .	2d (\$0.04)
THE GOD OF THE AMEN . . . . .	2d (\$0.04)
THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA . . . . .	1/6 a dozen (\$0.32)

THE CROSS OF CHRIST	
<i>(The Zero hour of the Creation)</i>	1d (\$0.02)
THINGS THAT DIFFER . . . . .	1d (\$0.02)
THE BATTLEGROUND OF THE SOUL . . . . .	1d (\$0.02)
A GOD THAT HIDETH HIMSELF . . . . .	1d (\$0.02)

*By G.P.*

THE GOSPEL IN THE FARMYARD	
<i>(For the Children. 110 pages. Illustrated)</i>	4/- (\$0.85)
GOSPEL MESSAGES FROM THE ANTARCTIC	
<i>(For the Children 170 pages. Illustrated)</i>	5/- (\$1.07)

*By H.F.*

THE CHURCH'S PRAYER AND SPIRITUAL INCREASE	2d (\$0.04)
THE REALITY OF GOD'S HOUSE . . . . .	2d (\$0.04)
THE CHURCH AS GOD WANTS IT TO-DAY . . . . .	2d (\$0.04)
THE CHALLENGE OF THE IMPOSSIBLE . . . . .	2d (\$0.04)
} 1/6 a dozen (\$0.32)	
READY FOR THE KING	
<i>(For the Children. 48 pages. Illustrated)</i>	1/6 (\$0.32)
ON WINGS OF FAITH	
<i>(For the Children. 52 pages. Illustrated)</i>	2/- (\$0.43)
BURIED TREASURE	
<i>(For the Children. 48 pages. Illustrated)</i>	2/- (\$0.43)

*By W.N.*

SIT WALK STAND . . . . .	2/- (\$0.45)
<i>An extract from</i>	
THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE . . . . .	3d (\$0.05)

*By W.L.*

A GOD WHO HIDES HIMSELF . . . . .	2d (\$0.04)
-----------------------------------	-------------



SEPTEMBER — OCTOBER, 1963.

VOL. 41. No.5.

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL ... ..	85	THE STEWARDSHIP OF THE MYSTERY (VII) ...	94
THE OLD CROSS AND THE NEW ... ..	88	PRISON - VISION - PROVISION ... ..	95
LEADERSHIP (VI) ... ..	89	FOR BOYS AND GIRLS ... ..	97
THE WAY OF RECOVERY OF THE GLORY OF GOD	91	TRAINING IN THE HOUSE OF GOD ... ..	98
BEING MADE POWERFUL IN THE LORD	...	...	102

EDITORIAL

“ AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING ”

There are probably few fragments of liturgy more subject to repetition than that from which the above first part is taken. At the same time, it may be an example of the ignorance and meaninglessness with which many phrases are constantly used in Christianity.

What *is* the *it* that was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be? The only true answer would be in changing the ‘ it ’ to a ‘ He ’—‘ As He was—so is He now, and ever shall be ’.

For the rest, there are few, if any, things that can carry this declaration. It is just this change from the beginning that is causing an immensity of concern and consideration in Christendom, and especially in evangelical Christianity. The beginning is the basis of a very great amount of review, reconsideration, recall, and effort to recover: for—as to Christianity—it is just not true that ‘ as it was in the beginning, it is now ’. True, ‘ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day, yea and for ever ’, and the foundation truths of Christianity are the same ; but for the more part Christendom is very much astray from ‘ as it was in the beginning ’.

This is not a new digression. The declension and departure began before the Apostles themselves had finished their course, and their later writings are marked by correctives, recalls, and reforms.

This had to do, not only with the character, words, and ethical standards, but primarily with the spiritual principles upon which Christianity *at first* rested and by which it was initially constituted. It is therefore the fact that the very spiritual constitution, the very essence and nature of the ‘ beginning ’ has changed, or been lost, which accounts for the deplored change, and—what is no less than tragic—loss of impact, authority, and accountability.



## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

It is to some of the elements of the beginning that we shall draw attention here. When we say 'elements', let it be understood that we are not meaning the 'elementary' in the sense of being just the simple rudimentary rules of Christianity. Rather do we use the word in the sense of 'elemental', which carries with it what the dictionary calls "like the powers of nature, great, tremendous, uncompounded; essential".

Not only is it the first *features*, but the elemental, inherent, concentrated essence, and vital potency of spiritual principles behind the outward expression. To this we shall seek to give attention, for we are convinced—after long and wide contact with Christians and Christian affairs—that it is here that the real key to the situation lies.

The mistake in most efforts to recover the original impact, dynamic, and authority of the first half-century of Christianity is in the point at which attention is applied. Such things as doctrine, form, procedure, and work are the points of attention or debate. While these things *may* be seriously open to question in various respects, to start with them is to start at the wrong end, and to do that is either to add to the confusion or to come to deadlock. The best that might accrue would be compromise, and compromise is *always* failure to face and deal with root causes honestly and courageously. We live in an age of compromise in every realm, and we are in an age of 'confusion worse confounded'. We Christians know that the world-situation will never be right and straight until "He comes whose right it is [to reign]": but He will have no compromise; no middle course. He will go to the root of things and deal with them *there*!

For *any* measure of recovery of lost power we have to get behind results and effects, whether it be in doctrine, procedure, form, or work, and get our finger upon causes. There was a reason and cause for the 'world-upturning' or overturning impact of Christianity 'in the beginning', and, as we have said, this lay with the eternal, heavenly, and spiritual principles or 'laws' which lay within and behind what happened. It did not lie with a fully fledged doctrinal knowledge; that was still in process of being made known.

When God is in the way of initiating or forming, He acts first and explains afterward. The explanation is the 'teaching' or 'doctrine'. This is the safe way. The teaching is the explanation of experience. It is only the reverse order when the teaching has been given and forsaken. Then—as in the case of the Prophets—God says what He is doing, or going to do, and acts accordingly. Initially, just enough light is given for God to act upon. This method and principle of God can be seen in both Old and New Testaments. It is always of value to have God giving light on what He has *done*, so that we come into *understanding* of His ways, rather than have a lot of teaching without experience. We should put ourselves in the way of God's dealings and acts.

The original impact did not lie within a fixed and established form of procedure. It certainly did not rest upon organization and institutions. These hardly existed, if at all. We repeat that it is folly to start toward hoped-for recovery of power by dealing with such things as the effects rather than the causes.

Let us then excavate through the accretions of Christian tradition and history, down to the bed-rock principles.

The writer, over a period of nearly forty years of personal contact with *evangelical* Christianity in many parts of the world, has been terribly impressed with one basic weakness or defect; which defect undoubtedly is indicative of a whole set of deflexions from what was the conception in the beginning. While the *doctrine* of the Holy Spirit is well known, and a great deal of teaching on that doctrine has been received, both from expositors personally, and through an immense amount of literature on the *subject*, there is a great deal to make real the question as to whether or not, after all, multitudes—even the majority—of Christians know anything about the Holy Spirit as a *positive*, active, indwelling presence. This question is supported by conduct, conditions, and ignorance which glaringly deny the teaching of the New Testament.

Jesus said of the Holy Spirit that "He shall be *in* you": "He shall guide you" (as within you)

SEPTEMBER — OCTOBER, 1963

“into all the truth”: “He shall take of mine and show it unto you”, and so on. John, by the Spirit, said (to all true Christians, not to special ones, or leaders or teachers): “The anointing which ye received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any one teach you; but . . . his anointing teacheth you concerning all things . . .” (I John ii: 27). While this related to a specific matter, i.e. Antichrist, the principle—according to Jesus—is of wider application, and is just that the Holy Spirit is an Arbiter *within* making believers aware of what is of God and what is not. It is something that is not for an advanced point in spiritual life, but relates to the very beginning: “The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit; that we are children of God” (Rom. viii. 16). The “law of the Spirit of life” is of constant *growing* reality and application as the very law of spiritual progress. It is no less a matter than that great factor of spiritual understanding and intelligence with which the New Testament is so largely occupied.

Let us say at once that this principle does not make the Christian independent of instruction through anointed teachers, neither does it by any means create an above-the-Scriptures position. The Holy Spirit will always work according to the Word of God, and *never* on any account make us superior thereto or independent thereof. Nothing but the utmost peril of deception could come from such an interpretation or ‘enlightenment’ or ‘leading’(?) that makes for such independence or superiority. Nevertheless, the *inward* government, enlightenment, and witness of the Holy Spirit is a primary factor in that which ‘was at the beginning’. Indeed, it goes to the very root of the very nature of the New-Testament Christian life; the essential *being* of a true child of God. This both determines and defines what we may call the new and distinctive ‘species’ which Christians are intended to be.

When the Apostle Paul uses the phrase: “He that is spiritual” (I Cor. ii. 15), he is describing the very difference of two distinct categories of people. Not only is he dividing them, but he is describing them. One category, he says, is deficient and defective in certain faculties, endowments, and qualifications, relating to knowledge, discernment, judgment, and understanding. The other category is distinguished by this very ability and qualification. But it is not an endowment given subsequent to new birth. Rather is it inherent in new birth, and a constituent of the new life. It is “He that *is* spiritual”; he that is a certain kind of being. This *being* is said to have been “born of the Spirit”, as differing from “born of the flesh”: “begotten of God”, as differing from “by the will of man”. This difference is the result of an Advent. It is the advent of the Holy Spirit *into* the spirit of the committed believer. Surely, it stands to reason, that the indwelling presence of such a one as “the Spirit of the living God”, God the Holy Spirit, is meant to be more than a passive, inactive, unenlightening, unendowing power and intelligence.

It is a very gratifying thing to see people changing and adjusting their lives, their conduct, their manner of speech and dress, their habits, their attitudes, etc., not because the law has been laid down to them by others; be he preacher or some other person; but because the Holy Spirit within has ‘spoken’ and made His mind known to them concerning such matters. There are numerous matters in the Scriptures concerning which there are most flagrant contradictions in so many Christians that we might well ask the question, ‘Where is the Holy Spirit in them?’

This is the *basis* of everything ‘as it was in the beginning’. This is what came in with the Advent of the Holy Spirit. This is what was intended and taught to be the very nature of the new dispensation.

Not that it was universally and perfectly lived up to, even in those times but it was truly there, accounting for very big and drastic changes in lives, even in the Apostles themselves. This, more than the outward happening, was the true nature and power of “The Acts of the Holy Spirit”; which is a truer title to the book called “The Acts of the Apostles”.

This bedrock principle worked out in every connection and direction, as to Christ Himself; the Church; procedure; function; work; and so on; and it is our purpose to show this, as we are enabled by the same Spirit; for we are convinced that this is “as it was in the beginning”.

Sometimes we hear people say, “Oh, don’t look back to the past and to what has been. Look on

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

to God's *new thing* "; and they quote Paul in saying, "Leaving the things which are behind". This is very superficial talk, to say the least of it. It can be very dangerous and misleading. Provided that there has been no departure, no forsaking, no loss, no relinquishing of anything that was of God; and that the foundation 'principles' still obtain *with what they mean*, there is room for the exhortation: "Let us go on to full growth, not laying again the foundation . . ." (Heb. vi. 1-6). But the New Testament, the Risen Lord, the Spirit, have strong things to say regarding 'Repenting and doing the *first works*' (Rev. ii. 5), and the Lord has to sadly remind of a position from which His people have departed, and call them back to their beginnings.

There *was* that which—grievously—is *not* now.

EDITOR.

(*To be continued*)

## THE OLD CROSS AND THE NEW

*Editor's Note.* The following message by the late Dr TOZER is given to our readers by the kind and hearty agreement of the editor of *The Alliance Witness*. We are very grateful for this fellowship with us.

T. A-S.

**A**LL unannounced and mostly undetected there has come in modern times a new cross into popular evangelical circles. It is like the old cross, but different: the likenesses are superficial; the differences, fundamental.

From this new cross has sprung a new philosophy of the Christian life, and from that new philosophy has come a new evangelical technique—a new type of meeting and a new kind of preaching. This new evangelism employs the same language as the old, but its content is not the same and its emphasis not as before.

The old cross would have no truck with the world. For Adam's proud flesh it meant the end of the journey. It carried into effect the sentence imposed by the law of Sinai. The new cross is not opposed to the human race; rather, it is a friendly pal and, if understood aright, it is the source of oceans of good clean fun and innocent enjoyment. It lets Adam live without interference. His life motivation is unchanged; he still lives for his own pleasure, only now he takes delight in singing choruses and watching religious movies instead of singing bawdy songs and drinking hard liquor. The accent is still on enjoyment, though the fun is now on a higher plane morally if not intellectually.

The new cross encourages a new and entirely different evangelistic approach. The evangelist does not demand abnegation of the old life before a new life can be received. He preaches not con-

trasts but similarities. He seeks to key into public interest by showing that Christianity makes no unpleasant demands; rather, it offers the same thing the world does, only on a higher level. Whatever the sin-mad world happens to be clamoring after at the moment is cleverly shown to be the very thing the gospel offers, only the religious product is better.

The new cross does not slay the sinner, it re-directs him. It gears him into a cleaner and jollier way of living and saves his self-respect. To the self-assertive it says, "Come and assert yourself for Christ". To the egotist it says, "Come and do your boasting in the Lord". To the thrill-seeker it says, "Come and enjoy the thrill of Christian fellowship". The Christian message is slanted in the direction of the current vogue in order to make it acceptable to the public.

The philosophy back of this kind of thing may be sincere, but its sincerity does not save it from being false. It is false because it is blind. It misses completely the whole meaning of the cross.

The old cross is a symbol of death. It stands for the abrupt, violent end of a human being. The man in Roman times who took up his cross and started down the road had already said good-bye to his friends. He was not coming back. He was not going to have his life re-directed; he was going out to have it ended. The cross made no compromise, modified nothing, spared nothing; it slew all of the man, completely and for good. It did not try to keep on good terms with its victim. It struck cruel and hard, and when it had finished its work, the man was no more.

The race of Adam is under death sentence. There is no commutation and no escape. God cannot approve any of the fruits of sin, however innocent they may appear or beautiful to the eyes



SEPTEMBER — OCTOBER, 1963

of men. God salvages the individual by liquidating him and then raising him to newness of life.

That evangelism which draws friendly parallels between the ways of God and the ways of men is false to the Bible and cruel to the souls of its hearers. The faith of Christ does not parallel the world, it intersects it. In coming to Christ we do not bring our old life up onto a higher plane; we leave it at the cross. The corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die.

We who preach the gospel must not think of ourselves as public relation agents sent to establish good will between Christ and the world. We must not imagine ourselves commissioned to make Christ acceptable to big business, the press, or the world of sports, or modern education. We are not diplomats but prophets, and our message is not a compromise but an ultimatum.

God offers life, but not an improved old life. The life He offers is life out of death. It stands always on the far side of the cross. Whoever would possess it must pass under the rod. He must repudiate himself and concur in God's just sentence against him.

What does this mean to the individual, the condemned man who would find life in Christ Jesus? How can this theology be translated into life? Simply, he must repent and believe. He must forsake his sins and then go on to forsake himself. Let him cover nothing, defend nothing, excuse no-

thing. Let him not seek to make terms with God, but let him bow his head before the stroke of God's stern displeasure and acknowledge himself worthy to die.

Having done this let him gaze with simple trust upon the risen Saviour, and from Him will come life and rebirth and cleansing and power. The cross that ended the earthly life of Jesus now puts an end to the sinner; and the power that raised Christ from the dead now raises him to a new life along with Christ.

To any who may object to this or count it merely a narrow and private view of truth, let me say God has set His hallmark of approval upon this message from Paul's day to the present. Whether stated in these exact words or not, this has been the content of all preaching that has brought life and power to the world through the centuries. The mystics, the reformers, the revivalists have put their emphasis here, and signs and wonders and mighty operations of the Holy Ghost gave witness to God's approval.

Dare we, the heirs of such a legacy of power, tamper with the truth? Dare we with our stubby pencils erase the lines of the blueprint or alter the pattern shown us in the Mount? May God forbid. Let us preach the old cross and we will know the old power.

A. W. T.

## LEADERSHIP

### CHAPTER SIX

#### LEADERSHIP AS IN DAVID

*1 Chron. xi. 1 - 3 ; 1 Sam. xvi ; Acts xiii. 21, 22.*

NO one will dispute David's right to be included in the list of leaders in Divine history. It was just a matter of David's *having* to come to the function because God *willed* it. Everything conspired to prevent it in the first instance; and to overthrow it later. His family despised him and even his father left him out of account. Saul in jealousy sought his life for years. His own son—Absalom—treacherously schemed and acted for his dethronement. The Devil himself seemed to have determined—by any and every means—to undo him. That he came to be Israel's greatest leader says clearly and eloquently that it was of God.

But it was not just and only naked sovereignty. There was ground in David upon which God could work. The sovereignty of God does not ignore the

weaknesses, errors, faults, and even evils in men. David was deeply culpable in quite serious evils and mistakes, and no man was ever more deeply disciplined than he. Nevertheless the Divine calling had that in the man which meant enough to God to give ground for making a great leader of him. It is to that ground that we give attention as we proceed to gather the factors and features of leadership from the Bible.

Let us say here what we have said in other instances: we are not embarking upon a study of the life of David. All that we are doing here is to underline the characteristics of leadership as seen in him, and as abidingly essential in all who will exercise that function of influencing others in relation to the purpose of God.

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

There is one characteristic in David which explains everything, and includes a very great deal. It is

## SPIRITUAL GREATNESS

David rose to simply sublime heights of spiritual greatness, and the occasions were of the most testing nature. This we shall see as we proceed.

Let us first examine the spring of this spiritual greatness which made it possible for God to refer to him as "a man after my [God's] heart".

Beneath David's spiritual greatness there was:

## (1) A great sense of responsibility.

There could much be made of the courage and devotion springing from that sense of responsibility in defending and rescuing the sheep from the lion and the bear. We can take it that in that hour when no public eye was upon him, when there was no other motive or incentive, if God had seen a willingness to save his own life, or forfeit the life of a single sheep as a matter of 'discretion' or 'policy', He—God—would never have chosen David as the shepherd of His people Israel, and the type of "the great shepherd of the sheep . . . even our Lord Jesus"; who laid down His life for the sheep; and who said: "Whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it".

Then, on the same principle of responsibility, with all that has been written and said about it, not too much has been made of the encounter with, and assault upon, the giant Goliath. This was the stuff of his later concern for the nation.

It is all too easy to sacrifice Divine interests for personal security or gain: to throw away cheaply the things precious to God because of an inadequate sense of responsibility. If it can be said truly that any attitude or conduct of ours meant loss to the people of God, then we have forfeited all right to be regarded as a spiritual leader.

## (2) A heart wholly for the Lord.

In the instances of the lion and the bear, it is evident from his words to Saul that it was as before the Lord. "The Lord that delivered me . . ." The Lord got the glory.

In the case of Goliath the Lord and His honour were the motivating and activating interest. This matter of 'the heart for the Lord' carries us into too many incidents, connections, and ways of expression to be tabulated here, but it is not necessary; in a sense, it sums up his life and flows out in

his Psalms. How much *that* explains God's great patience and faithfulness! It was a sense of responsibility for the Lord's honour.

## (3) A great concern for the House of God.

David had come to a clear apprehension of God's eternal desire to have a place of dwelling in the midst of His people. He felt so deeply that he should take responsibility for God's satisfaction in that matter that he expressed himself thus:

*"Lord, remember for David all his afflictions:  
How he swore unto the Lord,  
And vowed unto the Mighty One of Jacob:  
Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my  
house,  
Nor go up into my bed;  
I will not give sleep to mine eyes,  
Or slumber to mine eyelids;  
Until I find out a place for the Lord,  
A tabernacle for the Mighty One of Jacob."*

*Psalm cxxxii.*

We know of his labours and longings for the House of God; it forms a large part of his Psalms. Such abandon to what was—and still is—so dear to the heart of God, brought God alongside of him, and, although he went through times of rejection, persecution, discrediting, and—in the episode of Absalom—exile and heartbreak, God vindicated him eventually. Such responsibility for God's satisfaction is a major factor in divinely chosen leadership.

## (4) A great respect and regard for the anointing.

The anointing was—to David—a very sacred thing. If it had been given even to one who had made himself unjustifiably David's enemy, and who had done him untold harm and caused him unspeakable suffering, David would not put forth his hand against the Lord's anointed; not though it would have been immensely to his advantage to do so, and when that enemy was completely at his mercy.

David may have known that the dishonouring of the anointing, wherever it was, would return upon the head of him who dishonoured it, but he sought no such judgment. The anointing was a very responsible matter with David, and he would not touch it in word or deed.

## (5) A honest lament over the fall of his enemy.

Perhaps at no point did David's spiritual greatness rise to greater heights than in his lament over Saul's death. He was far from the spirit which says,

'he deserved it'; 'it is God's righteous judgment on him', and so on. There were no innuendoes; no condemnations, no remembrances of Saul's evil deeds; no self-vindications; no gloatings and rejoicings. Sorrow, grief, regret, and kindness almost sobbed themselves out in that lament. In the light of all that he had suffered at Saul's hands only real greatness could account for this spirit. History may put a very different complexion on the end of Saul, and the chroniclers make no romance of it; but for David it was a grievous thing.

Yes, spiritual greatness was truly characteristic of David.

#### (6) Disappointed ambition.

We have seen what a large place God's House had in the heart and life of David. But when it came to the actual realisation of his holy ambition and the building of the House, he was forbidden, and deprived of the privilege. In almost peremptory words God said: "thou shalt not build the house" (I Kings viii. 19). What would a smaller man have done? We leave the reader to answer that question. As for David, no doubt greatly disappointed and saddened, he rose above his personal feelings and prepared with all his might for the House (I Chron. xxix. 2), and gave a private possession in addition to all his public funds and resources.

To see another doing what has been our greatest desire in life is testing of spiritual measure; but to help that other with all our might is a proof of stature; provided, of course, that the Lord has definitely marked out that other with anointing for the work.

(7) Adjustableness when mistakes have been made.

More than once did David make a grievous and

costly mistake. We do not enumerate these failures. An outstanding instance was the bringing of the Ark up to Jerusalem on the 'new cart', contrary to the way prescribed in Scripture. The motive was pure and the purpose was right. But the method was wrong and disaster overtook the project. Uzzah lay dead. David was angry with the Lord. But he sought in the Scriptures an explanation, and having found it, he forsook his aggrievedness, made the necessary adjustment and did the thing in the Lord's ordained way. Thus again he showed that he was spiritually big enough to be a leader. He could confess his mistake. He could let all Israel know where he had been at fault. And he could act accordingly.

A very great factor in leadership is this grace and ability to adjust when mistakes are made. Even great men make them, but their greatness is shown in how they deal with them.

#### (8) Sensitiveness to sin.

This needs only to be mentioned for very much in David's Psalms and history to leap into mind. The most plaintive, heart-rending, and devastating outpourings of a sorrowful heart in all literature are to be found in some of David's utterances. And these are usually in relation to his sins and failures. Such sensitiveness to wrong in oneself is very necessary in God's judgment.

A forcing on when wrong should be righted is to make the spirit hard and callous. The Spirit of God is very sensitive. Finer susceptibilities are a mark of noble souls and spiritual refinement.

I think that what we have said is enough to give further substance to the matter of leadership, and it only remains to be re-said that leadership with God is not official and by human appointment, but, *in principle*, is always a matter of spiritual measure.

## THE WAY OF RECOVERY OF THE GLORY OF GOD

*"And about the time of her death the women that stood by her said unto her, Fear not; for thou hast brought forth a son. But she answered not, neither did she regard it. 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" (I Samuel iv. 20 - 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" (I Kings viii. 10, 11).*

**["CHABOD"]** - "The glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord"! 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 did not know it all. She did not know that that Ark was more than just a material emblem; that the Lord's Name was associated with it, and



## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

that He was very jealous concerning it. And though, from Israel's point of view, it had gone, and they had lost their glory, the Lord was well able to look after His own testimony, well able. The subsequent chapter immediately gives the story of God's reaction with regard to His own Name, and His own testimony.

If the Ark is taken into the house of Dagon, so much the worse for Dagon ; the Lord is not going to suffer. And if it is taken from there to Ashdod, the hand of the Lord is heavy upon them of Ashdod. So, mingled with the regret, there should have been this conviction—God is still God, and He is very jealous for His Name, and well able to look after His own interests, even when His people fail Him: He cannot fail, for He is God.

She also forgot that one of the most precious parts of that Ark was the Mercy Seat, so that, not only was the Lord well able to look after His *own* interests, but He was well able to bring back the glory to an undeserving people, and indeed He still is. He brought the Ark back quicker than you might have thought possible ; it needed no army, no effort, nothing from Israel's side—God did it all, and the people that held it were glad to be rid of it ; they themselves sent it back. Thank God for the Mercy Seat. Thank God that even a people who had thrown away, as they did, all hopes of being useful to God, and all rights of having His glorious presence among them, are not cast off. God does not cast off His people whom He foreknew. The Ark came back.

Another thing that the widow of Phineas ignored was that, before ever these last tragic moments came, the Lord had been preparing His chosen servant, who, in due course, would take the responsibility connected with His glory. Samuel lived in their house ; Samuel was around ; she must have seen him and known him: but she never gave another thought to Samuel ; he was so small, so insignificant ; I suppose she would feel he was nothing to do with it, but he was everything to do with it. The wonder of God's wisdom is not only that He is well able to look after His own interests, and gracious toward His people, but that, in secret, He makes His own preparation, and produces His own instrument that can serve Him. So far as she is concerned, not being aware of these matters, it is 'Ichabod'—the glory has departed.

I have been meditating upon the reason, the explanation of this catastrophe. It is seen, of course, to those of us who know the story, in the immediate breakdown and failure in the house of Eli ; but

I think that was only the end of a long process—just the last stage of 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, and those of you who know the Word at all will remember that the key-phrase in that dark story of the hundreds of years of tragedy amongst God's people, is that there was no king in Israel ; they lacked leadership. That, of course, is true. But I have also observed that, with the closing chapters of the Book of Joshua, the priesthood went into eclipse—there was no ministry of intercession. In the whole of the Book of Judges there is no mention of priests, except in a most depraved and perverted form. When we pass from that book into the first book of Samuel (i. 3), we very soon read: "and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phineas, priests unto the Lord, were there". The glory has departed because the ministry of intercession has ceased. Even in those brighter days of the book of Judges, when, for the time being, leaders did arise, and for a little while brought relief and triumph to the people of God, even then there is no mention of this essential, basic—although often hidden—task of serving the interests of God in the ministry of priestly intercession.

'Ichabod'—the glory has departed. You do not need that I should go over the particular tragedy of Eli and his household, for it all fits into this one suggestion which I put before you, that, when there is no vital priestly ministry, there is no glory—the glory departs—'Ichabod'! However, let us look at it from the positive side. The glory did come back. It came back in great fulness. And if we look behind the sovereignty of God and the grace of God—and how we praise His Name for both!—we find this figure of Samuel, God's priestly instrument.

You may say that the glory was a long time coming back—it was! Samuel's life was a long one. But the glory *did* come back! And if we are called to patience, let us be reminded that patience is the very essence of priestly ministry ; persistence, continuance, these were the secrets of a life which had such a tremendous influence upon the whole course of history among the people of God. I do not think that it is any exaggeration to say that here, in the person of Samuel, is the man who, under God, was the means of a complete change. The glory came back, and Samuel, above all else, is known to us for his work of intercession.

What can we learn from Samuel?

SEPTEMBER — OCTOBER, 1963

## THE VALUE OF SIMPLICITY

Well, I think, in the first place, we learn the value of *simplicity*. Samuel was not a priest; he had no official place in the priestly order; he was a Levite, but even so, his father seems not to have been engaged in any Levitical work; for practical purposes, he was just an ordinary boy of an ordinary family. And yet, you cannot call Samuel 'ordinary', for he had such a miraculous entrance into the world—God brought him in.

There is not much power in any ministry of intercession unless there is that behind the vessel, that God brought it in. That, surely, was the strength that held him all through the years, this knowledge that it was no natural contrivance, and certainly nothing that he could offer; but *an act of God* that brought him in. Every prayer ministry must begin there, and must keep always on that basis.

But when you look at this one whom we have so described as an 'act of God', what do we find? We find, that as he comes to the house of the Lord, it is said, "the child was young" (chapter i. 24); and again, "But Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child" (chapter ii. 18). There is something very simple about this vessel of God's service. It goes on to say, "Moreover his mother made him a little robe". No wonder that the widow of Phineas overlooked him; he was so small, so insignificant; what had he to do with glory? It is the simple, and often the despised, and the insignificant, that can serve God in the place of prayer. One of those Scriptural 'buts' that are so precious is here linked with Samuel: "And the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord: for men abhorred the offering of the Lord. *But Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child*".

Just a child, in all his weakness and inadequacy, to face a flood of evil and hopelessness; but he stood his ground; he stood there with the Lord, and the glory came back. We need not be ashamed of our simplicity, nor of our conscious inadequacy: that was what God was looking for in those days—someone little enough, humble enough, simple enough, to be ready to His hand. And in Samuel He found just what He wanted.

## THE VALUE OF TEACHABLENESS

I think also of Samuel's teachableness. Listen again to the prayer, the first prayer, of this man of prayer. "Speak; for thy servant heareth". That is the secret of true intercessory ministry—an open

ear to the Lord. What we have to say to the Lord can come out of that, but the first thing must come from the Lord's side.

Here, then, is one ready to be taught. And as he grew up (and what emphasis is laid upon the fact of Samuel's 'growing up'! again and again it seems to be underlined, how he grew), this is what is said of him: "And the Lord appeared again in Shiloh; for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel" (I Sam. iii. 21). You notice the way it is put. Not, 'Prayer became mighty in Shiloh, because here was a man who was determined to give himself to prayer'. Everything begins from God's side. God spoke again! because He found someone simple enough, humble enough, to listen to Him; and when He spoke, all the rest grew out of that.

All his life Samuel lived on that basis. The time came when the people demanded a king, and to Samuel that meant that *he* was being set aside, and he was very sore about it, and grieved; but being the man he was, we are told, 'he prayed' (I Sam. viii. 6), and the Lord said, "Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee" (viii. 7). But this is the remarkable thing—Samuel then was the one who sought for Saul, and anointed Saul, and brought Saul into his place. What a willing, humble, teachable spirit must have been in him to do that. And then, of course, the whole thing was a failure, and the time came when the real king was to be brought out, and Samuel, now an old man, experienced and mature in the ways of the Lord, went to the family at Bethlehem. But you notice, for all his experience, he was still able to make a mistake; and when he saw the first son of Jesse, he said, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before him" (I Sam. xvi. 6), but he did not do anything about it; and he was sensitive enough for the Lord to be able to say, No. In spite of all his years, and all his standing, he was able to adjust and to listen to the Lord. And the Lord had to say to him, "The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart". Compare him with old Eli, with his fixed, heavy condition. Though old, Samuel is still like a little child, ready to be taught. That is why the Lord could use him, because of his simplicity, because of his teachableness.

I wonder if that mother knew the kind of surroundings to which she was committing her tender son? I doubt it. If she did, she had remarkable faith. But in any case, it was all right; you see, God wrought a miracle in this tender thing, exposed to all the strength and influence and power of evil, and yet quite untouched by it all. That is a miracle,



## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

to keep pure in those circumstances, in that atmosphere ; it is a miracle, but it is absolutely essential. For here, surely, is the whole secret of power with God in the secret place : it is purity of spirit. There is no substitute for that.

### THE VALUE OF DISINTERESTEDNESS

At the end, or at least, toward the end of his life, when the whole question arose about Saul, Samuel was able to appear before the people, and challenge them as to whether or not he had ever, in any matter, sought his own interests ; and the whole people gave their agreement to the fact that such a thing could never be said about Samuel. They witnessed that the simplicity of that pure boy had been preserved, and that the aged Samuel was still simple and still pure after all those years. That is a miracle. The Lord keep us like that!

And when Saul had turned against Samuel, had thrown away his kingdom, and by his wilfulness and disobedience had driven Samuel from his presence, still, we are told, Samuel mourned over Saul. He allowed no bitterness to get into his spirit, nor did he turn away himself, to look for an alternative. The Lord had to send him for an alternative, but so far as Samuel was concerned, so pure, so simple was his heart, that, having seen all this failure, and suffered all the personal distress and loss that came to him because of it, he went back to his secret place in Ramah, and he prayed ; and he prayed broken-hearted prayers. That is the kind of instrument that brought the glory back to Israel : simple, pure, but mighty, mighty!

You say, is it quite correct to attribute this remarkable change from the 'Ichabod' day, to the day when the House was filled with the glory—can

you attribute all that to Samuel? I would like to draw your attention to a most interesting indication that you can do so, arising not from the actual wording of the Scriptures, but from the names of the books. Historically, the life of Samuel ends in the twenty-fifth chapter of the first book bearing his name. But spiritually he goes on to the end of the second book bearing his name, to the reign of Solomon. Right through to the very eve of this day of glory, the whole of that history is included under the heading of 'Samuel'. I read that originally these two books were one, but they were known as 'Samuel'. And all I can say is that it was Samuel, humanly speaking, by spiritual ministry and effectiveness, who spanned the gap between the 'Ichabod' period and the time when the glory returned. In the sovereignty and grace of God, Samuel was the prayer instrument that prevailed. Thank God for Samuel! Where is the Samuel of to-day? Well may we ask!

We know, of course, that it was Samuel who anointed David ; it was Samuel to whom David fled when he was persecuted by Saul. He represented, in a certain amount of hiddenness, apartness, but close touch with the circumstances, and still closer touch with God, he represented what is always absolutely essential if the glory of God is to come in—a prevailing ministry of intercession. We are told, that when Saul turned against him, he went back to his home at Ramah ; and Ramah, I understand, means 'heights'. We are told earlier on that, at that home that he had in Ramah, he built an altar. What Israel owed, what David owed, what the people of God owed, to a man who lived in the heights! who lived by the altar, and who held on for God!!

May we be like that, for His Name's sake.

H.F.

## THE STEWARDSHIP OF THE MYSTERY

### CHAPTER SEVEN

#### THE "MYSTERY" OR DIVINE SECRET IN THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

**ALTHOUGH** neither the word "mystery" nor the word "stewardship" occurs in the Letter to the Galatians, that which they represent is undoubtedly there. Wherever Paul was, and to whoever he wrote, his ministry was the same fulfilling of his particular 'stewardship'. Indeed, the Galatian letter is rich and deep with this Divine secret, as we shall see. Was not this really the very battleground of the full and ultimate "eternal pur-

pose"? The words most in evidence in the letter are well known—they are: "liberty", "Spirit", "sons", and "grace".

Usually the letter has been regarded as wholly a matter of Christian doctrine—justification by faith and not by works. This may be true, but it is not the whole truth. Whatever the doctrines of Christianity are, they always relate to one ultimate purpose, and that purpose is the significance and



SEPTEMBER — OCTOBER, 1963

place of God's Son in the eternal counsels of the Father.

The letter before us is to be viewed from two standpoints: one, what may be called the negative; the other the positive.

The Apostle has much to say as to what does *not* now obtain in the economy of God.

The whole Jewish economy and system as in the former dispensation no longer obtains. Its sign and token of true Judaism—circumcision—is not valid in Christ: "Neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision" (v. 6, vi. 15).

The constitutional government of Judaism—the Law—no longer rules and determines relationship with God. The negative aspect; setting aside and over-riding, runs through the whole letter.

As to the positive side, we have mentioned the governing words—'grace', 'liberty', 'Spirit', 'sons'—but we need to note the spiritual sequence of these terms.

'Grace' is the all-comprehending character of the new dispensation. This is set over against the legality of the former régime of "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not" as imposed from the *outside* upon the *very nature* of man.

'Liberty' is release from the 'bondage' and tyranny of that humanly impossible demand.

'Spirit' is the new nature, dynamic, and principle of a "new creation" (vi. 15).

'Sons', or 'sonship', is the sum and goal of all. This is the greatest and most sublime thing that God has ever revealed to man. There is nothing higher and nothing beyond this. Grace will have its full manifestation in sonship. Liberty is the 'liberty of sons' as over against slaves. The Spirit is the Spirit of God's Son—producing sonship in believers.

Sonship is *the secret*—"mystery"—of God, intimated in types, but hidden in reality during past ages. Sonship is reserved into Jesus Christ. It is not possible apart from Him. Through faith in Him the Spirit of sonship is given in new birth and constitutes an *inward* relationship with Him. It is

in—and only in—the renewed *spirit* of the believer that the Spirit of God's Son dwells. That is the meaning of the so-well-known Galatians ii. 20: ". . . I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me". That 'secret' of Christ—the Anointed—as a personally actual and active reality *within* is *the mark* of this "new creation" era which was not the hall-mark of former ages, and was never "made known" to former generations. This is the *fact* which 'Galatians' sets forth. This letter is the enunciation of and the battle for this immense *fact*. Around the factual 'secret' all the other things are gathered. And *battle* it was, and is! To the Jewish leaders and teachers Christ Himself had said: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do" (John viii. 44). This terrible indictment had its meaning and force in their antagonism to Him as "Son of God". Sonship has *ever* been the occasion of Satanic hostility. That was the occasion of Satan's jealousy and envy, leading to his bid for supremacy and resulting in his being cast out from high Heaven. He well knew the implications of sonship; that dominion is supremely vested therein. He has ever coveted that dominion. Hence his hatred for the person of *the Son* and the *principle* of sonship.

Those Judaisers—doing the Devil's work—dogged the steps of Paul wherever he went in order to subvert his converts from his particular 'stewardship'. The Apostle's anger reaches white heat in this letter because of this Satanic attempt to nullify this supreme destiny of 'sons'.

He says that his early 'travail' for them unto birth is being repeated in relation to Christ being *fully* formed in them (iv. 19). And he does not stop short of calling the curse of God upon subverters of the great and ultimate calling of sonship.

So we must read the letter, not only in the interest of a *part* of the Christian faith—"justification", but in the light of the transcendent secret of God—sonship. Not—let it be understood—as sharing Deity, but as "joint-heirs with Christ".

## PRISON—VISION—PROVISION

"And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison" (Gen. xxlix. 20).

"Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon . . . and Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream

. . . I have heard say of thee, that when thou hearest a dream thou canst interpret it. And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer."

"And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom the spirit of God is?"

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

"And he [Joseph] gathered up all the food of the seven years . . . and Joseph laid up corn as the sand of the sea, very much . . ."

"And the famine was sore in the land" (Genesis xli. 14 - 16, 38, 48, 49, 56).

". . . desiring to gain favour with the Jews, Felix left Paul in bonds" (Acts xxiv. 27).

"And when we entered into Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the prætorian guard" (Acts xxviii. 16, margin)

"The prisoner of Jesus Christ" (Eph. i. 1 ; iv. 1).

"I John . . . was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus".

"And I heard . . . a great voice . . . saying, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it to the . . . churches" (Revelation i. 9 - 11).

THE passages quoted above are a summary of the lives and ministries of three of God's servants, the fruit of whose experience has meant life to the people of God in a very full way. But that way of God's sovereign choice is not peculiar to those three alone. It is the story of many more, both in Bible times and since. To the former we could add Jeremiah and Daniel, as outstanding cases.

There are many such records in the 'Book of Remembrance' of those whose hard way has meant—and is now meaning—bread for the spiritually hungry. The prison has not always been *literal* chains and incarceration. Sometimes it has been a sick room ; sometimes the lonely isolation of a divinely-appointed place of service ; sometimes the rejection and exclusion of a servant of God because of prejudice, blindness, jealousy, or spiritual smallness on the part of those who could so force him out. Of many it could—and can—be said: "for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus".

There are some features of such 'imprisonments' which it may be helpful to note. Inclusive-ly, of course, we have to have our hearts at rest as to the certainty of the Divine government. Provided always that such a position is not due to a wayward, self-willed, or disobedient course on the part of the one concerned, and their situation is not due to anything akin to that of Jonah's predicament ; although there may have been human weakness and mistakes, yet God is greater than all, and given a heart really true to Him, He can turn all things to serve His main end: "Who worketh *all things* after the counsel of his own will".

In difficult and seemingly impossible situations there will always be much room for reflection upon the faults and mistakes which *could* account for

the trouble. 'If only' is a desolating reflection. 'If only Paul had not appealed to Cæsar!' 'If only Joseph had told Potiphar what his wife had really done!' There is no end to this kind of reflection, and there are very few who, if they had their time over again, would not—they think—have done differently, and so have avoided a great deal of trouble. We are not referring to particular sins, but to 'mistakes'. The matter of the sins of the past goes without saying that we should—with our present light—not repeat. With so much of what we *now* look upon as mistaken, we *then* acted according to the best light that we had. This provides a very large realm for sovereign grace, and sovereign grace is quite equal to the task.

The adversary of God and of our walk with Him will flog us hard with accusation to make us mistrust Him. There is thus a big realm which has to be definitely committed to the Father's understanding and mercy.

Having said that, we can look at some of these more comforting features of adversity.

1. God is never overtaken by an emergency, nor is He the victim of adverse activities. This fact is so evident in the above instances.

Joseph's classic verdict upon the whole soul-wracking experience was 'You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good', and then he gives the all-justifying reason—"God *meant it*". Paul and John would have heartily endorsed that verdict.

The very foreknowledge of God in choosing and calling His servants, whose hearts He cleanses from selfish and worldly ambitions, is involved in what befalls them in the way of their devotion to Him. Even Job, than whom no one ever had a more bewildering history, could say: "He knoweth the way that I take".

Not even in the greatest and most terrible of man's defaultings, and Satan's seeming triumph—the "Fall"—was God unprepared and unprovided with His way through. The answer was with Him before the demand was actually existing—"The Lamb [was] . . . slain from the foundation [the laying down] of the world". God's end justified His permission. Grace and glory will vastly transcend the suffering and the sorrow. With God there are no unforeseen accidents. "He is Lord of *all*".

2. While the servant in question is going through the dark, cold, and desolate ordeal of the 'prison', he does not know what it all means. At *best* and *most* he knows that the Lord is God. All the appearances are of being cut off, shut up or in ; being forgotten ; having suffered through the treachery, disloyalty, cruelty, or fickleness of men

SEPTEMBER — OCTOBER, 1963

—even of brethren ; or the vicious spite of evil powers, human and satanic. The iron can eat into the soul, as it did with Joseph. The battle against bitterness of spirit, disappointment, depression and despair may be fierce. Joseph had no knowledge of the coming fourteen years of vindication ; the fruit of his sufferings. Disillusionment was a cruel foe, for *present* experience gave useful ground for the mocking evil spirits to make fun of his early dreams of honour.

Paul and John never imagined that for two thousand years people would read with immense profit and gain that which came from their prisons. They knew nothing of making spiritual history for the duration of time and eternity. But so it was.

3. The major factor in these imprisonments and apparent limitations was that the fruit was for a time yet to come. Pharaoh's dreams and Joseph's interpretation related to a time not yet come and which had to be prepared for in sheer faith. God knows what is coming, and He Himself prepares and provides for a situation beyond the present. In the deep dark night of adversity, God may be doing something, securing something which will "save much people alive". In our own time, because of the poverty and shallowness of contemporary resources, there is a reverting to and reproducing of the deeper, stronger, and more heart-satisfying ministry of those times when it cost deeply to be "obedient to the heavenly vision".

The writer included among his personal friends a servant of God whose name is known worldwide for his Bible-teaching ministry. That dear man was formerly the minister of a certain church. There came a time when the responsible people in that church decided upon adopting policies and procedures which he believed to be quite contrary to spiritual principles. The minister withstood this on Scriptural grounds. He was forced to leave the

church, and because 'this thing was not done in a corner', it was taken up by the secular and religious press, mostly to his condemnation. For several years no church or people would have anything to do with him. He was ostracised, excluded, isolated, and confined to his own home, coming down—with his wife—to their last two shillings and sixpence. But, said he to me, 'It was in those years of imprisonment that I was able to give myself so thoroughly to my Bible as to lay the ground for the many subsequent years of world-wide Bible teaching! There was no church, however important, and no convention, however large, that would not welcome him (if they were faithful to the Bible), and the university of the city of his later ministry honoured him with a doctorate of divinity.

Not all—in *their lifetime*—are given their vindication, but the principle holds good that, in times of adversity, God prepares and provides for a time to come.

So, Israel was preserved for the subsequent centuries, in spite of the brothers' treachery ; because Joseph went to prison and there proved his God.

So we have the infinite treasures of Paul's prison ministry in his letters. So we have the priceless wealth of John's Patmos visions and writings. For these latter there was nothing that they could do but to write ; and the writing—though they did not know it—was to be the food of saints for many generations to come.

*Prison.* God only knows all the exercises of an eager heart when shut out and shut in by—*what seems to be*—the unkindness of men, or the overtaking of adversity!

*Vision.* And yet such times can be times of an 'open Heaven' and much spiritual enrichment.

*Provision.* And the fruit may be life to many in a time of spiritual famine.

## FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

### A CENTRE OF FRAGRANCE

**MENNO SIMON** had been a Roman Catholic priest, ignorant of the Gospel and scoffing at those who read the Bible. Then he came to a true knowledge of Christ, and was determined to give his whole life to the work of leading others to have the same faith in the Saviour. He lived in Friesland, in what is now North Holland, at the time of the Reformation, and it was then that he became known as an Evangelical Preacher.

Because of what he found in the Word of God, he preached and practised Believers' Baptism, and this got him into trouble with the authorities. He was forced to run away from Holland, as a price had been put on his head, and anyone who sheltered him was condemned to death.

Those whom he had helped and taught became known as 'Mennonites'. They did not like this, for they were followers of Christ and not of Menno.



## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

but such names are often given out of malice. Sometimes, however, they become names to be proud of, and it is certain that the early Mennonites suffered much for their love to Christ. Like Menno, they were driven from their homes, and forced to go into hiding, though they could not leave their own country, as he was able to do.

They did not need to do so, for not a great distance from Amsterdam there were marshes and lakes, with many small islands, and it was on these islands that some of them found refuge from danger, and were able to live their lives together without being caught by their persecutors.

They soon found that the boggy or peaty soil of these islands was wonderfully rich for the vegetables which they planted. Even when they were no longer in danger, they stayed on to get their living from this special soil. They turned from vegetables to flowers, and from those simple beginnings there has developed the most wonderful flower-growing area, where beautiful and costly plants and flowers are daily brought to the market at Alsemeer to be sold by auction, and carried far and wide.

In the sixteenth century the place was a haven for poor, persecuted Christians; in the twentieth it is the centre of living beauty and fresh fragrance.

At 5 a.m. the barges begin to arrive up the canal which runs right into the market, having travelled along the canals or around the lakes (from which the peaty soil is collected and brought to the islands), and the precious plants and blooms are unloaded, and set out for the benefit of the many buyers. And many sight-seers from all over the world come to visit the market and to see the display of the flowers.

Not that the flowers are there to be admired; the purpose is that they should be sold. So, while the visitors are being led around by their guides, the real business is going on in the auction-room. By noon the buying is completed, and the beautiful blooms and flowering plants are stacked carefully into vans to be taken off to the nearby Airport. By

2 p.m. some of them will be in London and Paris; by 3 p.m. others will be in Rome and Stockholm; by the late afternoon planes carrying others will be touching down in New York. Day by day the work goes on, with lovely colour and scent being dispatched to bring pleasure to the people of many lands.

If only some of the persecuted Mennonites of four hundred years ago could find themselves in Alsemeer to-day! They would see that their boggy haven had now become a centre of industry and beauty, that the place of their sufferings is now a place from which sweet fragrance goes out to the world beyond.

It has always been like this; the difficulties and trials of God's people have always been used by Him to provide a ministry of blessing to others. "Thanks be to God who leads us, wherever we are, on his own triumphant way and makes our knowledge of him to spread throughout the world like a lovely perfume"! (II Corinthians 2. 14, Phillips).

I was over in Alsemeer recently, and was able to move about among the scented flowers in the market. One thing, however, seemed to me a pity. It was that there were men who were so used to it all that they cared nothing for the fragrance. As lines of trucks, loaded with lovely carnations, were pushed to the waiting vans, I saw that each porter, pushing or pulling, had a lighted cigar in his mouth. Tobacco was the only scent they had, or wanted. And I thought of the many boys and girls who could be enjoying the sweet perfume of the love of Christ, but instead are only breathing in the fumes of this world's pleasure and sin. What a pity, to be surrounded by the fragrance of Christ and even to be in a centre of this fragrance and yet not be able to enjoy it.

You must not let this happen in your case. The important thing is to take the opportunity while you have it, and open your heart wide to the love of the Saviour.

H. F.

## TRAINING IN THE HOUSE OF GOD

*"And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued as far as Dan" (Genesis xiv. 14).*

*"That thou mayest know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God" (I Timothy iii. 15).*

*"Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some unto honour, and some unto dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, meet for the master's use, prepared unto every good work" (II Timothy ii. 20, 21).*

**T**HERE is one basic adjustment which, when we have made it, will help us very much in the understanding of our history and of our experience.

Abraham is a very clear illustration of this. It might have been thought that after the God of Glory appeared unto him in Ur of the Chaldees and had given him His instructions for going, and Abraham had come into the land to which he had been directed and led, immediately he would have felt that now he had arrived; and now that he was in the place where the Lord meant him to be, with that sense of being in the Lord's place, in the right place, there would come a sense of tranquil rest. 'Now I have arrived. Now I am here. Everything is all right. I have obeyed the Lord. I have come into the place of His choice, appointment and direction. Here I am. All is well.' And this sense of satisfaction would fill his heart.

We might think that surely that is what would happen, as we think that is how it ought to be with us—that, having some direction in our life for some work of God, or having a history with God, and finding ourselves, in following the Spirit, in a certain place, realm, situation, relatedness—well, what more? We are here, we have obeyed the Lord and are where we felt the Lord wanted us to be, so we feel that everything is going to be all right now. We look for this sense of the Lord's satisfaction, and of quiet contentment and tranquility, for are we not in the place of His purpose, of His will, of His promise, of His covenant?

But what we very often do find is exactly the opposite. We find that we have come into a realm of severest testings of faith and the deepest trials that we have ever known. It would be much easier back there in Ur of the Chaldees. We have stepped into something where it is nothing short of a continuous ordeal in the spiritual life.

That is exactly how it was with Abraham. Rather than feeling that his hope, a hope based on the strength of the Lord's word, was fulfilled, it was deferred. One difficulty overcome only meant a greater one to be overcome. That is the fundamental adjustment which I have said is necessary for us to make if we are going to understand our experience and our history with God.

We are here, then, in the presence of a very vital law. Firstly, if ever we have a great experience, at the beginning or at a subsequent crisis in our history; if there is a big movement of God in our lives; if we meet the Lord in some new way; if we are brought into some new vision and sense of purpose, it stands out in our lives as something that has made history, but that experience is never

the totality of God's intentions. There is bound up with it far more than we understand. The realm of the greatest spiritual realities, the sphere of the greatest Divine values, the way of the highest heavenly calling, is the realm of the most difficult education, the sphere of the fiercest and most persistent conflict.

That is what Abraham discovered. He might have asked many questions. Probably he did as the years went on—'Is this what God called me to, what He meant? Has anything gone wrong? Is there really a right correspondence between what I am going through and all those expectations, hopes and promises that God gave me long ago? What has happened? It is not at all what I expected. It is so different.' And disappointment, a sense of disillusionment, could come in.

What I am saying to you, dear friends, is that that may not be wrong, but just right, for this reason: We have been born into a household (that is the word in the New Testament—"Whose house are we . . .") (Hebrews iii. 6—the household of God), and this household is, above all other things, the place of spiritual training and education. It is there that we have to learn our greatest lessons and find our best equipment and fitting for the work of God.

The household of God is the relationship and fellowship of believers. It is not a place, but relationship in the Holy Spirit into which we are born when we are born again. That is the sphere of our training. "He led forth his *trained men, born in his house*". It is a matter of education, and in this matter the great governing principle is that the Lord—if it is a real expression of the house of God, if it is something true—will never allow it to remain a mere theory. The House of God is no mere theory with God. It is no mere metaphor or symbol. It is a downright—and can be a terrible—reality to our flesh. It proves to be like that when the very relationships of Christians become the most testing ground of which they have any knowledge, and it becomes a terrible thing sometimes to their flesh. The governing law is that God will not allow things just to remain theories in the matter of His House. They must be realities, desperate realities, sometimes. Everything—for our own spiritual life, for the future of God's testimony—confesses to hang upon this matter of our learning in the House.

So we come to recognize the *reality* of the household of God. What are your ideas associated with that familiar phrase—"the house of God"? Perhaps you prefer to say: The relationship of be-

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

lievers as they are called together in one life. What are your ideas about it?

Well, you have many, and they may all be parts of the truth, but what I am underlining is that the House of God is *the* place of spiritual training, the sphere, the means, the instrument of our spiritual education. We are being trained in the House of God, not only for present purposes, but to be in the great House and this training is a tremendous business. Many times we would run from it and escape. If ever we sing the song of the Psalmist: "Oh, that I had wings like a dove! Then would I fly away, and be at rest" (Ps. Iv. 6), it is often because of our relationships with other Christians. *There* is the difficulty, the trial, the pinch. If we are—I repeat—in the place where the Holy Spirit is at work—and the House of God is the sphere of His operations—He is not letting anything pass that cannot have a place in our fitness for that House. "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, meet for the master's use". The Holy Spirit lets nothing pass. If there is anything covered He will uncover it. If there is something wrong He will bring it to light. Our history is very largely a matter of the Holy Spirit's teaching us what belongs to the House and what does not, what has a place and what has no place, what is fitting and what is not fitting. It may be a terrible history under the hands of the Holy Spirit.

There are many blessings in the House of God, many amenities, which are for our comfort, for our good, and for our protection. I am not speaking about them, but am just remaining with this one thing. Whatever else the House of God is—and it is many things to us; a place of refuge, a place of comfort, a place of many blessings—it is supremely the place of our training.

Men think of training Christians and Christian workers in their different ways: institutions and what not. The real spiritual training is not academic. It is in the House of God where we have to learn all the lessons of life together, where we can be completely defeated; and there the foundation principles of our Christian faith—that is, in the realm of our relationships—are laid.

What is the meaning of love if it is not a corporate thing? What is the meaning of patience if it has not to do with other people? What is the meaning of any thing in the Christian life if it is not a related thing? It is there that we are tested. It is there that we find our real discipline and training.

"*He led forth his trained men.*" You notice

why? It is very simple, yet testing. Lot, the compromiser; Lot, the difficult person—getting himself and his friends constantly into trouble; Lot, the awkward man, the selfish man who put his own interests and well-being first and always chose that which would suit his pleasure; Lot was captured, with his family and all that he had, and was carried off, far away. Abraham might have rubbed his hands and have said: "Good riddance to bad rubbish! Thank God he has gone!" But he did not. For a weak 'brother', a failing 'brother', a difficult 'brother', a compromising 'brother', a 'brother' who was the cause and occasion of so much trouble and difficulty, "he led forth his trained men", and he did not return until he could bring back his 'brother'. It is a lesson. You can see a reflection of the Father God.

Now, we are not judging or condemning Lot, for we are all very wayward people. We are all the cause of a lot of trouble to the Lord. "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them to the uttermost" (John xiii. 1—R.V. margin). That is a household matter, learning to love like that in the House! Have you never felt that everything would be better if only so-and-so would go, would get out of the way? Well, here is a big 'brother' fighting for the weak 'brother'—and that finds out our household reality! I mention that and leave it.

What do we learn in the House? We are trained unto so many things in this household way. We take the word to Timothy again: "Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some unto honour and some unto dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour". The House of God is something that is pure, holy and sanctified. It is in the House that you learn the lesson of the terrible injury and hurt that can come by some sin, some wrong, some evil, something that is of the flesh, something that is of the world getting into the House of God. How everything is held up! The Holy Spirit has a controversy! There is confusion! There is something wrong in the House, and we learn sanctification, purging ourselves. There is the great purging which took place on the Cross for us all, as to our sins, but we are coming to the House and here there is something that we have to do: we have to note the things which do not belong to this realm of God and purge ourselves from them.

The Apostle had a lot to say to the Corinthians about that. "If we discerned ourselves, we should not be judged" (I Cor. xi. 31). We see what trouble



SEPTEMBER — OCTOBER, 1963

Abraham himself came into over this very matter of separation, because of the place into which he had come. While he was in Chaldea it was different, but now he had come into this place, and what belonged here was altogether different from what belonged to Chaldea. In Chaldea he could do things that he could not do here. You notice how Abraham learned lessons in the place because of the nature of the place into which he had come.

There was Lot, the compromiser. Well, while Abraham showed himself to be the champion of the weak and failing 'brother', he was aware all the time that what Lot represented—compromise with the world, with the flesh—was a menace, a constant menace, and that while he would save the 'brother', he would have no compromise with the thing that the 'brother' was dabbling in. Sodom? No, he is outside of that! He will love the failing 'brother', to win him and save him, but he will have none of his compromise. He had to learn in a practical school separation in that matter in the land.

On one occasion, under great stress and duress, Abraham went down into Egypt. What a lesson he learned! Everything went wrong there! What about his lie over Sarah and Pharaoh? He had to learn a lesson; that that kind of thing just will not do.

The kings of Sodom and Gommorah came to reward Abraham for championing their cause, but he would have none of it. 'I don't want any of your gifts. I take nothing from this world.' He kept himself unspotted from the world.

Abraham learned a terrible lesson with Hagar over Ishmael! And here, in the House, we learn, like Abraham, these lessons of sanctification and of holiness; what we may touch, and what we may not. I wonder, dear friends, if we are learning in these matters!

*"He led forth his trained men, born in his house"*. (A lot of interesting questions arise over that. It must have been a big encampment, for he was not living in a house. He was living in a camp, dwelling, we are told, in tents. Leave that aside.) These were men who, whatever else they were trained in, were trained for war. And, dear friends, if there is one lesson that we have to learn in the House of God, it is the lesson of spiritual warfare.

We must be trained people in this matter in the House of God. There are enemies, and we know it—spiritual enemies. Are we learning, really learning in the House of God? Are we being trained by our experience? in our fellowship, in our relationships? How are we coming out of the training?

It is not enough to have experiences—deep, drastic, terrible experiences. It is not enough to have history. We have to learn the meaning of our experiences; be able to extract the Lord's meaning from our history and be the embodiment of that meaning. We have to learn in a very, very hard, drastic school the lesson of holiness. Holiness is no theory, no subject in the Bible, but we are learning what we can touch and what we cannot touch; how we can behave and how we cannot behave in the House of God. We have been stunned by our failures in this matter of holiness, but we are learning—this is something that we are coming to know.

In all other matters it is like that. We are to-day the very embodiment of what we have learned in a hard school, and that school is the House of God. It must be so, dear friends. No teaching will ever be true teaching if it is not born out of experience. No teaching is just Bible teaching, the teaching of truth and doctrine as some thing. All true teaching comes out of experience. Abraham has taught us a great deal and we have not exhausted him yet! He had no Bible. He never learned anything from the Bible. He is a great teacher for all time, and he got all that he has given to us through experience. We have a Bible, but it cannot take the place of experience. Our experience must correspond to the Bible, and if we are to be teachers, to pass on values to others, it cannot be that we just retail Bible truth, studied subjects. It must come out of life in the House of God. It must be like that.

What shall we say? Rather than trying to get away; rather than breaking away; rather than allowing the discipline to isolate us, separate us; shall we not say, 'For my very education I need the House of God. For my training in heavenly things I need the fellowship of God's people. I need the relatedness, however difficult it may be, however sore the trial. I need the House of God.' We do, for there is no true training in any other way. §

---

*Unless the messages in this paper are otherwise initialed, it can be taken that they are by the editor; that is, all uninitialled messages.*

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

## BEING MADE POWERFUL IN THE LORD

"Finally, be made powerful in the Lord, and in the strength of his might" (Ephesians vi. 10—A.S.V. margin).

IN this verse the Apostle Paul is not asking us to do or be something for which the Lord has not made adequate provision. At the end of this tremendous letter he sums it all up in an appeal to us: "Be made powerful in the Lord". We might well, however, ask ourselves the question: "But how?"

The only way to be made powerful in the Lord is by the most costly devastation of our natural strength and resources. God's strength and power will not rest on, or in, our natural strength. He will not allow it to be linked to our natural resources. His strength will never be manifested through our unbroken strength. It is, in fact, one of the greatest troubles in the work of God to-day that there are too many naturally powerful Christians, using their own strength and resources in the service of the Lord.

In Genesis xxxii. 24 - 31 we have a picture of a naturally powerful man, broken of his own strength that he might be "made powerful in the Lord".

The first thing I should like you to note is that it would be hard to find a stronger man than Jacob was. We are not, of course, speaking necessarily in a physical sense, but in the matter of his will and mind. Jacob would allow nothing to stand in his way. He would use any means to obtain what he set his mind on. In this he fully lived up to the meaning of his name—supplanter, deceiver; a 'twister'. The sheer drive and relentlessly strong will of the man are almost frightening. He wanted the birthright—he got it; he wanted the blessing—he stole it; he wanted to prosper—and he obtained the best of Laban's flocks; he wanted Rachel—and he got not only Rachel but Leah as well! And it is indicative of the strength of this man's will that he could work hard for fourteen years in order to win Rachel. Even when the Lord appeared to him in a dream at night, and he became afraid and said: "How dreadful is this place! It is none other than the house of God", the next morning his nature got the better of him and we hear him bargaining with God—"If you will do this, and that, and the other, I will build Your house." (Genesis xxviii. 12 - 22.) Could there have been a more seemingly incorrigible man, combining as he did a scheming and cunning cleverness with a steel-like strength of will? Yet it was this very

man who was to become Israel—the father of the nation, whose very name was for ever to be associated with the people of God.

The second thing I should like you to note is the way God prepared Jacob for the cost of becoming "strong in the Lord". We must remember that, like so many of us, Jacob was quite unaware of himself. If he was aware of anything that was not quite right, he probably found himself unable to overcome the strength of his own nature! If at times he had in fact any vague consciousness of the need to be changed, it is probable that, again like so many of us, he did not want to be. But God, in His infinite love, began the process of preparation for just such a change.

There was only one other man in the whole of the Middle East who could match Jacob, and who had the same strength of will and cunning mind—that man was Laban. So God placed Jacob with Uncle Laban in such a way that he could not be free from him for many years. I have no doubt that Jacob felt very badly about Laban to begin with, and even more so when he became the victim of his uncle's cleverness. But there came a day when Jacob became uncomfortably aware of a similarity of character and ways between himself and his uncle. It was probably the first time that he ever began to be sick of himself.

Now this is just what the Lord does with us when He is preparing us to pay the price of being broken. He puts us into situations and circumstances with people that we cannot get on with, and who we feel very badly about, until we wake up to the fact that we are only seeing ourselves in them.

Then the Lord took this process with Jacob one step nearer home and Jacob began to see himself in Leah, for, make no mistake, Leah had much of Laban in herself. Now it is more than probable that whatever Jacob felt about Laban and Leah, there was one person in the whole family who he felt was above deception, and that was his beloved Rachel. But the Holy Spirit was taking Jacob's education as near to his heart as possible. He discovered the same ability to scheme and deceive in Rachel which was in himself. These three—Laban, Leah and Rachel—were like a triple mirror; Jacob saw himself three times from different angles.

When we come to Genesis xxxii. 22, we discover a man who has been prepared of the Spirit of God

to be broken. He is now, in one sense, a man on his own, sick of his own nature and of his own strength of will, and desperate that the Lord will somehow do something.

No man or woman is ever ready to pay the price of being broken, that they might become strong in the Lord, unless they have had such a self-revelation that they are sick of themselves and are desperate for the Lord. What many of us fail to recognise is that the people we are living amongst, working with, are often the instruments by which God reveals us to ourselves and makes us desperate for Himself.

The third thing I should like you to note is the way God finally broke Jacob of his own strength. Jacob was a desperate man, and when the Lord met him his desperation made him take hold of the Lord and refuse to let Him go until He did something. It was not a mere experience that changed Jacob, nor a teaching, nor some method of sanctification, but a meeting with the Person of Christ. When Jacob came later on to describe what happened he did not call it 'The Place of Brokenness', or 'The Place of Blessing', or 'The Revelation of the Cross': he called it 'the face of God', for it was when the cunning, scheming Jacob looked into the face of God that something happened that was to leave its mark on him for ever. It is interesting to note that when the Lord finally broke Jacob, it was not by a revelation filled with thunder and lightning, or a vision of the

all-mighty greatness of the Lord. He did not hammer Jacob into pieces by a crushing revelation of His strength. No. God broke Jacob by all that is summed up in this unbelievably tender term—the face of God. The face of God is linked with the limping Jacob. A broken Jacob has become Israel.

It is true that every real experience of the Lord is but a looking into the face of God, for it is as we behold Him that we are changed. What are you seeking? An experience in itself? Some new truth? Some new victory? What is it that you look for? It will all be met in a revelation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

In the light of this, it is a wonderful thing to note that God rarely calls Himself the God of Israel, but often calls Himself the God of Jacob. To those who are beginning to see themselves, who are becoming desperate for the Lord, the title 'the God of Jacob' is one of the most comforting in the whole of the Bible. Read Psalm xli, verse one: "*God is our refuge and strength*", and then look at verse seven, where we discover that it is "*The God of Jacob*". Turn to Psalm xx, verses one and two, and we read: "*The name of the God of Jacob set thee up on high; send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion*".

In the final analysis there is only one explanation for the way Jacob became Israel, and it is in that word in Romans ix. 13: "*Jacob have I loved*". God loved Jacob into Israel.

L. L.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We acknowledge with gratitude the following gifts received during June and July, 1963.

Amsterdam, Holland £1 19s. 7d.; Auckland, New Zealand £1, £1, £2; Bangalore, India £1, £2, £2; Barry, Glam. 7s. 6d.; Basingstoke 10s.; Bath 10s.; Bergen, Norway £3; Bilaspur, India £2; Birkenhead £1; Brighton 10s.; Burnley 5s.; Clitheroe £1; Compton Dando £1 1s.; Copenhagen, Denmark £1 10s.; Edinburgh £1; Erith £1; Findon 10s.; Flores £3 9s. 11d.; Frankford, Canada £1; Gormley, Canada 13s. 1d.; Hamburg, Germany £2; Hastings £5; Hatch End £10; Hongkong £1 0s. 8d.; Hull £2; Inverness £2; Ipswich 7s. 2d.; Leigh-on-Sea 10s.; London, N.10—£1; S.E.23—10s., 10s., £5, £1, £5, 10s., 10s., £5, 10s., 10s.; W.C.1—10s.; Lostock £2; Mackay West, Australia 15s.; Maidstone 2s. 6d.; Massawa, Eritrea

£1; Mountwaverley, Australia £1 12s.; Newcastle-on-Tyne £1 5s.; Northwood £2; Plymouth 10s.; Pontypool £1; Pretoria, South Africa £10; Richmond, Surrey £1; Singapore 8s.; Southampton 10s., 10s., 10s., 10s. 10s.; Thelwall £1; Upper Gornal £1; Winona, Canada £2; Wirral 10s.  
Total £102 6s. 5d.

Allentown, Pa. \$10; Birmingham, Ala. \$1; Cedar Grove, N.J. \$2; Chugiak, Alaska \$2; Dallas, Texas \$10; Elwood, Indiana \$1; Lansdowne, Pa. \$5; Long Beach, Calif. \$2.50; Macon, Ga. \$2; Minneapolis, Minn. \$5; Montgomery, Ala. \$20; Orlando, Fla. \$5; Stratton, Nebr. \$10; Trussville, Ala. \$5; Tulare, Calif. \$5; Watertown, Mass. \$5; Williamsport, Pa. \$5  
Total \$95.50

Agincourt, Ont. C.\$00.96; Ottawa, Ont. C.\$10.00  
Total C.\$10.96

Amstelveen, Holland Gld.50.00



## WITNESS AND TESTIMONY LITERATURE

---

### By T. A-S.

GOD'S REACTIONS TO MAN'S DEFECTIONS . . . . .	7/- (\$1.50)
RIVERS OF LIVING WATER . . . . .	6/- (\$1.28)
PROPHETIC MINISTRY . . . . .	5/6 (\$1.18)
OUR WARFARE . . . . .	4/6 (\$0.96)
PIONEERS OF THE HEAVENLY WAY . . . . .	4/6 (\$0.96)
THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO PAUL . . . . .	4/6 (\$0.96)
WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CHRISTIAN . . . . .	4/6 (\$0.96)
FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE	4/6 (\$0.96)
THE GOLD OF THE SANCTUARY . . . . .	4/- (\$0.85)
THE CENTRALITY AND UNIVERSALITY OF THE CROSS	3/- (\$0.64)
WE BEHELD HIS GLORY (VOL. II) (cloth boards)	4/6 (\$0.96)
(Art paper covers)	3/6 (\$0.75)
THE BATTLE FOR LIFE . . . . .	2/6 (\$0.53)
GOD'S SPIRITUAL HOUSE . . . . .	1/6 (\$0.32)
THE WORK OF GOD AT THE END TIME . . . . .	1/6 (\$0.32)
HIS GREAT LOVE . . . . .	1/6 (\$0.32)
THE SCHOOL OF CHRIST . . . . .	1/6 (\$0.32)
UNION WITH CHRIST . . . . .	1/6 (\$0.32)
GOD HATH SPOKEN . . . . .	1/- (\$0.21)
THE ULTIMATE ISSUE OF THE UNIVERSE . . . . .	9d (\$0.16)
THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT . . . . .	6d (\$0.11)
THE WATCHWORD OF THE SON OF MAN . . . . .	4d (\$0.07)
BETHANY . . . . .	3d (\$0.05)
THE SUPREME VOCATION . . . . .	3d (\$0.05)
CHRIST—ALL, AND IN ALL . . . . .	3d (\$0.05)
CHRIST IN HEAVEN AND CHRIST WITHIN . . . . .	2d (\$0.04)
THE ARM OF THE LORD . . . . .	2d (\$0.04)
THE GOD OF THE AMEN } . . . . .	2d (\$0.04)
THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA } . . . . .	1/6 a dozen (\$0.32)

THE CROSS OF CHRIST	
<i>(The Zero hour of the Creation)</i> . . . . .	1d (\$0.02)
THINGS THAT DIFFER . . . . .	1d (\$0.02)
THE BATTLEGROUND OF THE SOUL . . . . .	1d (\$0.02)
A GOD THAT HIDETH HIMSELF . . . . .	1d (\$0.02)

### By G.P.

THE GOSPEL IN THE FARMYARD	
<i>(For the Children. 110 pages. Illustrated)</i> . . . . .	4/- (\$0.85)
GOSPEL MESSAGES FROM THE ANTARCTIC	
<i>(For the Children 170 pages. Illustrated)</i> . . . . .	5/- (\$1.07)

### By H.F.

THE CHURCH'S PRAYER AND SPIRITUAL INCREASE	2d (\$0.04)
THE REALITY OF GOD'S HOUSE . . . . .	2d (\$0.04)
THE CHURCH AS GOD WANTS IT TO-DAY . . . . .	2d (\$0.04)
THE CHALLENGE OF THE IMPOSSIBLE { . . . . .	2d (\$0.04)
1/6 a dozen (\$0.32)	
READY FOR THE KING	
<i>(For the Children. 48 pages. Illustrated)</i> . . . . .	1/6 (\$0.32)
ON WINGS OF FAITH	
<i>(For the Children. 52 pages. Illustrated)</i> . . . . .	2/- (\$0.43)
BURIED TREASURE	
<i>(For the Children. 48 pages. Illustrated)</i> . . . . .	2/- (\$0.43)

### By W.N.

SIT WALK STAND . . . . .	2/- (\$0.45)
<i>An extract from</i>	
THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE . . . . .	3d (\$0.05)

### By W.L.

A GOD WHO HIDES HIMSELF . . . . .	2d (\$0.04)
-----------------------------------	-------------



NOVEMBER — DECEMBER, 1963.

Vol. 41. No. 6.

## CONTENTS

EDITOR'S LETTER	...	...	...	105	THE STEWARDSHIP OF THE MYSTERY (VIII)	...	112
"AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING"	...	...	...	106	FOR BOYS AND GIRLS	...	116
LEADERSHIP (VII)	...	...	...	108	PAUL'S TWO YEARS IN ROME	...	117
GOD'S CITY AND ITS CITIZENS	...	...	...	110	GRASSHOPPER MEN	...	119
THE PEACE OF BETHLEHEM				...	...	...	121

## EDITOR'S LETTER

Dear fellow-worker in Christ,

With this issue we close one more year—the forty-first—of the ministry of *A Witness and a Testimony*, and

‘Here we raise our Ebenezer :  
Hither by Thy grace we’ve come.’

We lay our tribute of gratitude at the feet of our Lord for His gracious help through all the years, and not least 1963. The difficulties, sorrows, and conflicts of this year have—in some respects—been additionally severe, but we can truly say, “having received the help which comes from God, we continue unto this day”. Not only has the ministry been maintained, but there is a steady, quiet growth. Very few mails come without a fresh call—or some fresh calls—for the paper. Our old friends maintain their faithful and loyal fellowship and help, for which we are truly grateful.

During this year the personal ministries have been truly helped of the Lord. In the United States we renewed fellowship and ministry with friends of long standing, including Philadelphia, our dear brother Cressy of Springfield, Pa.; the company in Louisville; a touch with Adison Raws, of Keswick Grove, N.J., whom we first met there in 1925; and eight weeks of ministry at the Gospel Tabernacle (C.M.A.), New York.

It was our regret that we could not, during those four months, visit many others in response to their warm invitations. We are much before the Lord regarding a return to do more over there.

Then, this year's conference in Switzerland reached the high-water mark of blessing in every way. It was a real faith exercise to accept so many who applied to come, in view of the accommodation question. But the Lord undertook and, if there were some minor inconveniences, no one was in

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

any trouble. It was the largest company of all the years. The Lord very graciously made His presence felt. The ministry was more than sufficient, indeed—"twelve baskets full" over. Such a spirit of joy and love abounded, that I think that we all had a good deal of sympathy with Peter's remark on the mount, "It is good for us to be here, let us . . ." stay!

On our way back to London we had a happy evening with friends in the Landhaus, Schlieren, near Zürich.

Now we are here waiting on the Lord for the next phase, seeing that our personal responsibility for the work at Honor Oak has concluded. At the time of writing we are engaged with the matter of literature. A number of books and booklets have been out of print for some time. We are having these reprinted. Also several series of messages which have been in the magazine during past years are being printed in book form. We are also hoping to have some new books put out in the near future. Announcement and details of all this will be given to our readers when the above are ready, and a full list will be published.

The purpose and nature of this ministry is well known. The very simplicity of the magazine; the absence of either popular features or advertisements, makes it quite clear that it is for such as really need, and feel their need of, "solid food". We feel that there is an abundance of literature which can help in the elementary stages of the Christian life—a very needful thing—but we feel also that there is a need for that which will meet the Lord's people at and from the point where a greater measure of Christ is called for. It is also our conviction that a great world-shaking is coming, when the measure and depth of spiritual life will determine endurance, or even, survival. We *may* be working for "a time to come". If Joseph signified anything at all, surely it was faith's action and diligence in relation to the need of a time not yet present.

So, although we do not set *this* ministry above others, we have even at the cost of not being popular, to "make full proof of [our] ministry", and "fulfil the ministry which we have received of the Lord". If the Lord sees that it is necessary to Him, He will maintain it. We trust that we shall not be insensitive to Him when He sees that there is no longer need for it.

The probability is that some changes will come in the near future, and as this ministry is your partnership, we count much upon your strong support. Thank you warmly for all that you have given.

The Lord bless you more and more.

Yours in His grace,

T. AUSTIN-SPARKS

---

"AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING" (*continued*)

We have seen that the 'beginning' relates to the earliest part of New Testament times; not even to the latest parts of the New Testament. The latest writings are characterized by correctives, recalls, and appeals for recovery; showing that, all too soon in Apostolic times, things began to deviate from the first principles, and to change in both nature and form. These changes will be given more detailed consideration here as we go on.

For this present we confine ourselves to one more general and basic factor from which all else takes its rise. We have—in our former part—pointed out that the possession of the Holy Spirit within the spirit of the believer produces a new and different 'species' or genus; a new kind of person—the kind referred to by the Apostle Paul as "he that is spiritual", which he differentiates from "the natural [soulical or psychical] man". This is the new man which is the subject of all New Testament concern.



NOVEMBER — DECEMBER, 1963

It is not just that an element called 'spirituality' has been taken on, but a fundamentally different kind of man has been 'born' by the operation of the Holy Spirit. Albeit, the 'natural' or psychological man remains, and remains a force to be reckoned with. On one side, spiritual education consists of the growing realisation and understanding of how utterly different from the Spirit of God the natural man is. The tendencies, proclivities, directives, conceptions, etc. of the natural man work in ways that are just the opposite of those of the Spirit in the new man. This is one of the most obvious things in the early chapters of the book of the 'Acts'. In those chapters we have the essence of what came in on the Day of Pentecost as the very nature and principle of the new dispensation. It is an education to observe the way devoutly religious and wholly sincere men were being educated in regard to this fundamental difference between the natural—even though religious—man and "he that is spiritual". The inclusive and all-embracing factor was the absolute sovereignty of the Holy Spirit as the Executor of the risen and exalted Lord Jesus.

A strong, very strong, carry-over of the Old Testament system and mentality was present in those first responsible men, such as Peter, James, and John. Largely because of this one factor—this mentality—the advent of the Spirit had to be "like the sound of a mighty rushing wind". Not only a 'sound', but the force. The one initial necessity was that those concerned should realise that things were taken altogether and absolutely out of *their* hands; that whatever 'their hands' might imply—e.g., mentality, predisposition, reasoning, tradition, conception, interpretation, etc.—the Spirit of God was above that, either as contrary to it, or as having a meaning which they had never seen. That is the first factor in the practical meaning of 'As it was in the beginning'.

It would seem that, while those concerned realised the force of the happening, they had yet to learn the meaning of it, for from then onward the conflict between the natural man and the spiritual man, *in them*, was the way of their education. The transition from Judaism to the full implications of the new dispensation of the Spirit was fraught with some hard and painful battles and revolutions. Repeatedly we see a crisis presenting itself on this issue, and the balances trembling between the old order and the new. Not, let it be emphasized, between the world and evil men and Christianity (that was another aspect), but between the inheritance, training, and tradition of good and committed men ("devout" they are often called) and an altogether new heavenly meaning and mindedness.

Let us repeat; the drastic actions from Heaven, as in the case of Pentecost in general, and of Peter and Saul of Tarsus in particular, demonstrated that the new order *was* new and not a carry-over of anything. It was a mastery, a domination, a Lordship!

Peter, on the ground of his interpretation of Old Testament Scriptures about eating the unclean, might remonstrate with the Lord, but Peter's entire Apostleship and usefulness would depend upon allowing the Lord to know better, and submitting. It was a crisis in which Peter was on the threshold of a discovery which absolutely amazed him, and left him without any explanation except—'God did it', and "who was I that I should withstand God?" The principle herein contained is the battleground of the continuous question of less or more power and spiritual fulness.

The natural—psychical—man is positively incorrigible and inveterate in the matter of crystalizing, fixing, legalizing, and putting into final forms. He just *must* systematize and finalize. Although he may not know what he means, he will sing with gusto, "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be", because he is wedded to formulas. He resorts almost mechanically to 'drawing up something' to put it into a framework and make a box for it. Never has the Holy Spirit done something but men have subsequently taken the features of it and compiled therefrom a manual or text-book and have sought to impose it upon the Holy Spirit and the Church as binding and essential. The 'Beginning' shows that the Holy Spirit will have none of this. For Himself absolute liberty of action and method is demanded and never to be denied Him. From a consideration of historic and organized Christianity it is well-nigh impossible to realise that there are certain things that Christianity was *not* at the beginning.

For instance, it was *not* a new religion. Christianity was not set over against, or alongside of

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

other 'religions', so that it would be included in 'Comparative Religions'. Although some of the Apostles themselves were tardy in realising that Judaism was—by Christ—finished with and set aside, 'lock, stock and barrel'; and only Stephen (and perhaps a few with him) had seen the completeness of the break (for which he had to pay with his life), yet this fact had steadily to be faced; and its acceptance—fully or reservedly—determined the degree of their spiritual measure. Paul is to be accounted for on this one issue supremely. Their thinking, reasoning, and handling of their prejudices had to be done *after* the embarrassing experiences and accomplished facts. They started with 'acts' not with a new religion.

Further; Christianity was not a new 'teaching'. There is nothing in the whole record upon which to build a theory or affirmation that the Apostles went out with "The Teaching of Jesus" as a stereotyped system. They were not propagating in the pagan, heathen, or Jewish world new doctrines, as such, or a new system of truth. Explanations, which became the 'teaching' or 'doctrine' of the Church, were reserved for those who had responded in faith to the declaration of certain fundamental *facts* relating to the person of Jesus Christ; and these were few. The most that they did was to support and substantiate their testimony *to Him* from the Scriptures.

Once again; Christianity was not originally thought of as a new 'movement'. No plans of campaign were laid. There was no policy. Organization was almost entirely absent. The very small degree of this was subsequently forced upon them by the embarrassment of the very vitality of the spiritual life. A thought-out campaign did not exist. To 'set up', 'form', 'launch', or bring into being, or 'found' a new 'society', 'sect', 'community', was not in their minds. Outsiders put the labels on, perhaps because of the *spiritual* distinctiveness of the believers, but they never adopted a special title for themselves. The really distinguishing characteristic was not the name of a 'movement', but the presence of a mystery to all the outside world. Every attempt to explain them by a label, such as 'Christians', 'The Way', 'Sect', just missed the point. There does not exist a formula for, or an explanation of, life, whether natural or Divine; and if there were, it would be like trying to put the Pacific Ocean into a bottle. So much the worse for the bottle; as Jesus said about the new wine and the old wine-skins. It was this "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" which accounted for the experience, explained it in teaching, energized the action, and produced the 'form'—the *organic* form at the beginning.

Here, then, we have confined ourselves to the over-all, inclusive factor at the 'Beginning', that is the absolute sovereign liberty, government, mastery, and direction of the Spirit of the enthroned Christ in Heaven. This demanded a transcending, superceding, and subjugating of all the assertions of the natural man. This is a crisis, and then a progress. As we have implied, this had an effect both as to the relationship with the world, and the developments within the Church. The former of these two aspects will retain us in our next issue.

EDITOR

## LEADERSHIP

## CHAPTER SEVEN

## NEHEMIAH

**W**E repeat what we have said in other connections, that we are not writing even an abbreviated biography of the case on hand; nor are we engaging in an exposition of the book bearing his name. Everything is concentrated in the one matter of leadership. There are plenty of other things of importance connected with these men, but we are only concerned with this one factor in these brief messages.

It is necessary, however, to remember the time and occasion which brought Nehemiah into his great calling. It was the time when

## THE FORMER GLORY WAS LOST.

Assyria and Babylon had devastated people and land and desolation reigned. If Assyria and Babylon represent the power of this world, then, be-

NOVEMBER — DECEMBER, 1963

cause the people of God had flirted with the gods of this world, the world had been allowed by God to destroy the power of the (once) holy people. Babylon stands for confusion, and the descent from the high spiritual place in which God had placed them, down to an 'earth-touch', brought the Lord's people into the grip of a confusion which rendered them helpless and ashamed. Confusion ruled, and where there is confusion ruling, weakness and frustration prevail. The time of this condition was made sufficient—not less not more—to leave those concerned in no doubt whatever that it is a fatal thing to heavenly testimony to descend in spirit to this earth and its ways, even religiously. But having indelibly written the fact in the history of His people, the time had arrived when

#### GOD WAS MOVING FOR RECOVERY.

For this work of recovery, leadership was necessary, and Nehemiah was God's man for the occasion.

Having noted the time and occasion, we have next to take note of the significance of this movement of God.

If Babylon represents the confusion which is ever characteristic of this world—and let it be clearly understood that *the* mark of the curse that was once imposed upon this earth by God because man chose another god,—is ever and always confusion in the peoples and nations of this earth—then God's recovery movement will be for the restoration of distinctiveness. It is not necessary to say that, in every way, Israel was constituted by God a distinct and different race and people. It is a fundamental truth that the people of God are distinct from all others, and with God this is a matter of the most serious account. Seventy years of exile and captivity, with all the unspeakable sufferings and distresses are ample evidence of God's serious regard for this basic thing.

The wall of Jerusalem symbolically represented a boundary marking a within and a without, and the gates were the emphasis upon that feature. This feature is definitely referred to in relation to the other great symbolic city, the New Jerusalem—Rev. xxi. The gates represent the councils and judgments which determine the acceptable and admissible, and otherwise. They are the strength of right judgment. The wall is the symbol of a distinctive testimony to God in the nations and before Heaven. The breaking down of the wall, then, and the burning of the gates, signified the

ruin of distinctive testimony on the part of God's people. This, the significance of Nehemiah and his leadership, was that God was on the move to recover that distinctiveness of testimony which was—and is—the only reason and justification for the existence and continuance of God's people.

So, Nehemiah and the wall are identical in meaning, and leadership, as represented by him, is related to this matter of God's jealousy. The book which bears his name cannot be read without recognition of the fact that God's jealousy had been generated in the heart of this man. Nehemiah was not the man to tolerate mixture and inconsistent elements. In this he was truly like his heavenly Lord. Compromise was intolerable to Nehemiah.

The wall declares in no uncertain language that this thing is of God. Nothing which is not of God has any place here. Read the book again in this light alone, and its message is unmistakable.

Another thing which is of the significance of the wall and Nehemiah is

#### DIVINE FULNESS.

Jerusalem, in the thought of God, has always carried this symbolic meaning. It was the place of the abundance of God. In its prime it swarmed with people who regarded it to be the greatest honour and privilege to be its citizens (see Psalm lxxxvii). The nations brought their wealth into it. The Day of Pentecost found Jerusalem crammed and crowded with "men out of every nation under heaven".

It was *meant* by God to be a type of the heavenly Jerusalem—the Church. And this City, this Church—the Body of Christ—is said to be "the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. i. 23).

God never did believe in vacuums. He always believed in fulness. It is His nature and His desire, and He always works toward Divine fulness. How much we could bring in here to support this statement! But, alas, in the time of which we are thinking, Jerusalem was empty and desolate; "without form, and void"; a vacuum indeed! So, leadership, as represented by Nehemiah, related to Divine fulness to be recovered in and for the people of God.

May we interject here a word regarding this condition to-day. The spiritual meagreness, smallness, poverty, and consequent weakness of very many of God's people is a crying tragedy to-day. For years we have been appealed to by Christians in *many* places. 'We have so little spiritual food



## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

in our churches'. There are so many really hungry children of God.

Is this condition to be laid at the door of those who are ostensibly leaders? Let it be said at once that, whatever other purposes require leadership, this one of spiritual fulness is by no means the least. To fail here is to fail in a matter which is of the very nature and heart of God. Men of God, are the people for whom you are responsible in the way of "the fulness of Christ"? Look again at Nehemiah and recognize that the fire in his bones was the fire of God's concern for His fulness to be available again to His people, and to be characteristic of them. While we speak to the leaders, or responsible men, let us say to the people also that it is positively God's will that you should carry with you the impression above all others that you are wealthy and richly endowed people; that your God is a God of abundance. Be sure that you are availing yourselves of all that is available, and neither neglecting nor despising heavenly food.

As we look again at Nehemiah, another thing should impress us. It is that if we are really in line with that which God is doing at any given time and our hearts are aflame with His own immediate concern, there will be sovereign support given and provision made. To find that support we *must* be on God's positive line of distinctiveness and fulness as a testimony to Himself. The question of support is a very acute one in organized Christianity, leading to an endless variety of expedients. Surely, if Heaven rules and has all

resources, and really wants something, Heaven will meet its demands and requirements. Can we not expect and believe for this aspect of Nehemiah's leadership?

If the work of God is kept in His hands and is not allowed to become earthbound it will have Heaven's support, and, while there will be opposition enough, it will be 'finished' in triumph. It is the *spiritual* life of the Lord's people, the heavenly Israel which is the demand for such leadership as that represented by Nehemiah. It may not appeal to all, but only to a 'Remnant', but with them will be found the satisfaction of satisfying God in the thing *nearest* to His heart.

In Nehemiah, as an example of this needed leadership we have:—

1. A man with a heart-break over conditions.
2. A man with the vision of God's specific desire and purpose.
3. A man with spiritual initiative governed by instant and meticulous touch with God.
4. A man endowed with true spiritual discretion.
5. A man without compromise or who will not put policy before principle: full of holy courage.
6. A man free from personal interests in the work of God.
7. A man gifted with spiritual discernment.

Lord raise up such men for this needy hour.

## GOD'S CITY AND ITS CITIZENS

"For our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. iii. 20).

IT is sad that there are so many disappointed Christians. The reasons for this may be many, but all too often it is due to the fact that their original expectations were faulty, being based on conceptions which were really earthly. If we are counting on God doing something which is not truly His objective; if our outlook, even as to the things of the Spirit, has something in common with those whose "minds are set on earthly things"; we are bound to meet with disappointments. We were never intended to have such an outlook, for we by contrast, are citizens of heaven (Philippians iii. 19 - 20).

## GOD'S GOAL FOR THE BELIEVER

"Ye are come . . . to the city of the living God" (Hebrews xii. 22). This section of the Hebrew letter lists seven basic facts of the life of faith. The first of these is the heavenly city of God. Abraham, who was the great pioneer of faith and the father of all them that believe, came early to realise that this represented the Divine objective. "He looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God", and found that for him and those of like mind, "God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city" (Hebrews xi. 16).

All through the Old Testament one is given the

sense that behind the earthly Jerusalem there stood a heavenly city, hidden from view but nevertheless a definite spiritual reality. The New Testament makes it abundantly clear that this is the case, and that believers are destined to inherit this city—"So then . . . ye are fellow-citizens with the saints . . ." (Eph. ii. 19), ". . . only behave as citizens, worthily of the gospel of Christ" (Phil. i. 27, RVM).

We are not building this city. We are not even able to watch God building it. It is not identifiable by human senses. It is not affected by the chances and changes which happen to every human institution which has served God's purposes here on this earth. This is the city concerning which the psalmist affirmed, "She shall not be moved", the city which Paul described as "the Jerusalem which is above . . ." Of this city we are called to be citizens. This represents God's goal for the believer.

#### PREPARATION FOR CITIZENSHIP

The truth is that God is not ultimately concerned with what is being built up on this earth—even when the work is truly of His Spirit. He has something more permanent in view, more permanent and on a much bigger scale. It sometimes comes as a shock to us to discover how little concern the Lord has to safeguard and preserve movements and institutions which have a long record of blessing and usefulness. Men are concerned that the 'work' as a visible entity shall survive and continue; the Lord sometimes manifests no such concern. Its name may still have great significance and importance to men and yet there may be little evidence of that Divine jealousy which can always be associated with the Lord's Name. What does this mean? It surely suggests that the essential building of God is not founded on this earth; His interests are concentrated on the unseen and eternal heavenly structure. What the Spirit of God is working for is to make redeemed men and women fit and adequate citizens of that city.

It is this which God is seeking to do with each one of us. Quite irrespective of whether we have the understanding and co-operation of others; even if everybody else is opposed to us, still the work of equipping us to be citizens can go on. This is an intensely personal matter, for in the last place our faith is an intensely personal experience. Too many Christians are wasting time lamenting the lack of help or understanding which they have

from their fellow-believers. Too few—like the apostle—are insisting that whatever anybody else does, they make it a constant pursuit to reach out for "the prize of the on-high calling".

#### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE VISIBLE CHURCH

It might be thought that if this citizenship is such an individual matter, then our membership of a local church or assembly is of little or no importance. This is a grave error. Paul's words were written not just to casual believers who happened to be in the same city, but to a functioning group, who had their elders and deacons. It is quite true that the Lord did not build in Philippi in a permanent or final sense, but it is also true that the building work was going on. How better can men be prepared for citizenship than by learning how to live and work together?

This, then, seems to be the truth about the relation of the visible churches to the destiny of the individual believer, that is that his church life provides the testing ground and the sphere of preparation for his heavenly citizenship. When a local church is largely lifeless, then there is no particular strain involved in membership. As soon, however, as there is a group which in any way allows for the operations of the Holy Spirit among them, then almost invariably the individuals begin to wonder how long they can go on, or else look round for an easier place. This is not to suggest that their difficulties are not real. They may well be. It does not say that there is no need for change in their assembly. This is quite possibly the case. But God's greater concern is for this individual citizen. And the Devil's concern is also focused on this point. In those difficult circumstances can the believer have faith enough to go on with God and allow himself or herself to be made more suitable for corporate life? Or can some pretext or problem induce them to depart from the way of citizenship, under the illusion that they can walk with the Lord in isolation?

There is no doubt that the chief stress of the Philippian letter is on fellowship. In that community there seems to have been unusual strength and warmth in their life together. Nevertheless the writer seems constrained to keep emphasising it as a matter of great importance. The end of the third chapter explains the reason for this stress. It is as men learn to live together in the fellowship of the Spirit that they will be prepared for God's great and eternal city, and their appropriate place as citizens.

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

## A SOLEMN WARNING

And if not? The Hebrew letter, the one which sounds a number of warning notes, has something to say about this also. Having made it clear that the believer has 'come' to the city of the living God, the Spirit found it necessary to remind him that if he can be shaken from his faith position, he will be.

The Divine purpose is that only the things which cannot be shaken will have a place in the eternal kingdom. It is God's declared intention to attend to this matter Himself, and to do so by deliberately shaking "not the earth only, but also the heaven" (Heb. xii. 26). It is made clear that this is to be a feature of the last days of the dispensation. In the words of Phillip's translation it will be "the final shaking". It is essential, even though it may prove so painful, so that everything which is not of Christ may be seen to be so, and may collapse.

As we read these words, they may sound almost like a threat, but it is worthy of note that the Lord Himself describes this as a "promise". Happy is the man or woman who can emerge from such a shaking with a purer faith, and a deeper spirit of fellowship in Christ. For it is quite certain that fellowship is one of the features of this shaking. Are we held together by natural preferences, by similarity of outlook, by a desire for companionship? If these, or similar elements are the basis of our 'fellowship', then the shaking will find us falling to pieces and falling apart. Or are we true citizens of that great city, bound together by the life and love of Christ? If so, then we can almost welcome the shaking, for we shall

surely find new help from Heaven to "stand fast in the Lord" (Phil. iv. 1).

## A BRIGHT VISION

It was given to the Apostle Paul to present the challenge and the implications of our heavenly citizenship in terms of doctrine. John's gift was of another kind, so that he presented the same issues in the form of a bright vision. The Bible closes with his matchless description of the heavenly city which came down out of Heaven from God. It is as though the Holy Spirit says to us all—"Keep this in view. This is God's final objective and it must be yours also."

There is little to satisfy the natural mind in the vision. There is, however, a great deal to move our hearts. Those who know their Bible, and also know the Lord Jesus, will delight in pointing out the characteristics of Christ which everywhere abound. In a variety of ways, attention is drawn to the beauty, the attractiveness, the purity and the majesty of our Saviour. Whatever is found in that city speaks of Him.

It is with this always in view that the Holy Spirit seeks to work in our lives. We who are called to be its citizens, must be made like the city. When the time comes, our Saviour, in the great power of His resurrection life, will give us a suitable body—"conformed unto the body of his glory" (Phil. iii. 21). He is able to do so, and we can safely leave this with Him. Our responsibility is to co-operate with the Spirit now in the transformation of character which should precede that great Day. Let us never forget the importance of our destiny as citizens of Heaven.

H. F.

## THE STEWARDSHIP OF THE MYSTERY

## CHAPTER EIGHT

## THE "MYSTERY" OR DIVINE SECRET IN THE LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS

WHEN we come to the Letter to the Ephesians (so called), we come to what we may call the fountain-head of this matter. It is from here that we derive the fulness of the revelation given in this particular. With all the many things contained in this letter—and there is fulness here as nowhere else—the spring of *everything* is the, once hidden, but now revealed, secret of God. Everything must be regarded and looked at from this standpoint.

It should be realised that when we hold this Letter in our hand, we are holding one of the greatest, most momentous, and weightiest documents ever committed to man. This Letter embodies and presents the greatest religious crisis in the history of this world; for, out from *eternity*, and out from all past ages came a secret which God had ever kept within His own counsels unto a chosen time for its disclosure. By the disclosure of this secret a dispensation greater in significance



than all others was introduced.

The significance of this dispensation is the occasion for the cosmic powers to move into a conflict born of the deepest consternation and fear. That part of the Letter which—in our chapter and verse arrangement—is chapter vi from verse 10 to verse 20 (leading on to “Mystery” in verse 19) can only be rightly understood in the light of this essential dispensation-significance. Many have been—and are—the discourses and expositions on ‘The Armour of God’, and this warfare and provision are usually and generally taken out of the context and made something in themselves. But the kind of warfare referred to and the provision made for it are only really understood and appreciated by those who have *actively* entered into the light and meaning of this immense significance. There is, of course, conflict in various connections in every Christian life, and it is true to experience that this life is to be regarded as a warfare, with ‘soldiers’, ‘swords’, ‘trumpets’, ‘marching as to war’, ‘forts’, ‘banners’, a ‘Captain’, ‘commands’, and so on. All this is of general acceptance and relates to many particulars in moral, social and doctrinal questions. But the issue of ‘Ephesians’ is something infinitely more critical and significant than this.

When the Apostle Paul wrote this Letter he was not discussing a subject; he was not presenting a proposed idea for Christian life and the Church; nor was he setting down some beautiful or profound thoughts upon which his mind had been at work either in prison or during years before. He was making a proclamation of a revelation which had been specifically given to him from Heaven. Maybe he had had the force and immensity of this matter growing in him for long, but, either he had been unable to commit it to writing before because of circumstances, or the Lord had held him back because—in His foreknowledge—He knew that prolonged imprisonment would be the best occasion for this particular purpose, both by seclusion, and by transcendently saving His servant from the corrosion of inaction. This may be but a guess, but it is more than evident that, when the Apostle got to writing this Letter, his spirit was bursting all its banks. He exhausts language and employs every superlative. He rides rough-shod over grammar. He goes off at a tangent before completing a statement and returns long afterward to join up with the break. He has the longest sentence without a ‘period’ in all of his writings. Yes, the thing defies and defeats the command of language that even this “Mercury”

(Acts xiv. 12) possesses. It is so vast; it is so imperative; it is so important!

It is not something that can be regarded as optional in the matter of acceptance or non-acceptance, so that the Christian life will not be seriously affected by heed or heedlessness thereto. In this Letter we have the concentrated essence of the Gospel revelation. It will be a determining factor as to the value of each Christian’s life, and that of each Christian church. Thirty years after this Letter went out the seven churches in Asia (including that of Ephesus) were challenged and brought to judgment on the ground of this particular deposit, and their destiny was determined by it. (See Rev. i – iii.)

The two Letters—twin Letters—‘Ephesians’ and ‘Colossians’ are undoubtedly the crown of Paul’s ministry, especially his written ministry. The former is very contemporary because never was there such an active concern as to the corporate life of the Church as there is to-day.

If the Apostle had any awareness that his time before execution might be short it would be natural that he should want to put into writing that which, to him, was the greatest and most vital concern of his heart. So that we can rightly regard this Letter as that.

In the foreknowledge of God, Paul just *had* to be! The two main features of this Divine determination are just part and counterpart. The second was the complement or correlative of the first. The first was Stephen. It is impossible to read Stephen’s address to the Jewish rulers without recognizing that he had gone far beyond the entire position which they—as representing the sum of Jewish acceptance—held. He was devastating their fixed boundaries and mightily assailing the citadel of their exclusive traditions. He exposed the falsehood of their ‘Biblical’ interpretations and declared that the very Scriptures upon which they based their position contradicted their exclusiveness. Not only did those rulers refuse him a full hearing, but “stopped their ears and rushed upon him”. But only slowly did the first Christian leaders—Peter, James, John, and the others—come to Stephen’s position. Stephen was “pleading a cause already condemned”. The authority who used that last clause goes on to say—“We may fairly doubt whether the Church as a whole would have been prepared to sanction Stephen’s line of teaching. Had they been called to pronounce upon it, they might perhaps have censured it as rash and premature, if not essentially unsound.”

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

Paul's (as Saul) presence at the trial and death of Stephen was no coincidence; it was a definite and distinct incident in God's "working all things after the counsel of his own will". For exactly the same position as that enunciated by Stephen, the man standing there and giving his consent to the bloody deed was himself going to be stoned, beaten, imprisoned; and persecuted in almost every one of the numerous places to which he would go, and, at last, through Jewish intrigue, have his life taken from him. The arrest on the road to Damascus was but the ironical counterpart of the hearing of Stephen's statement of God's truth and Paul's violent reaction thereto. Paul just *had* to be, because of that extra deposit which Heaven had given to Stephen and which Heaven was determined should be the *full* meaning of this dispensation.

The writing of this Letter entitled 'Ephesians' was the completion of that which Heaven determined and would not be robbed of a second time. If Paul had been born after Stephen's death it might well have been (superstitiously) said, as Herod said of Jesus with regard to John the Baptist, 'This is Stephen come to life again'. God's time had come for His long kept 'secret' to be out, and hell was not to be allowed to keep it in, or quench it!

Paul had encountered some formidable giants in his (approximately) thirty year's ministry. The giants of Judaistic legalism and its bondage were laid low by his Letters to the Romans and Galatians. The giant of Christian carnality received some heavy blows in 'Corinthians'. In the Letters to the Ephesians and Colossians he reaches through the merely earthly aspects of the conflict to the heavenly, the supra-earthly; through the temporal to the spiritual; through the local to the universal; through the temporary to the eternal. In the 'Ephesian' Letter the term 'heavenly' is used five times, and we can only really understand the meaning and message of the Letter as we understand that term. It is upon that very term that the great difference in the dispensation turns.

From the natural point of view we can well understand the difficulty of the Jewish leaders and their great concourse of followers. They had a long and God-honoured history of temporal and earthly blessings. Had they not the Land given them by God? Did they not receive from Him the Covenant, the Oracles, the Holy City, the Temple, the Priesthood, and the Promises? What a tremendous case they seemed to have for their tradition! Theirs were the Fathers, the Patriarchs, the

Kings, the Prophets. Everything of all this massive heritage was in the body; visible, tangible, present, right down to earth. And now these other people, and Paul as their chief exponent, were saying that all that was past and belonged to a dispensation which had been concluded. With Jesus Christ there has come in a new dispensation, the entire nature and economy of which is spiritual and heavenly. "Every *spiritual* blessing in the *heavenlies*" (Ephesians i. 3.) To analyse the term according to the fivefold context of this Letter, the "heavenlies" are:—

1. A spiritual sphere; not a material, geographical locality.
2. It is above—or around—the earth, beyond the region of sense.
3. It is a realm of spiritual activities.
4. It is a realm of intelligent spiritual forces; with an order or system; a spiritual organization.
5. For a great part this system of spiritual intelligences and activities is evil and hostile to all that is of God, and to all that represent Him.
6. It is also—in its higher realm (what Paul calls "the third heaven"—II Cor. xii. 2)—the realm of celestial intelligences; where Christ is enthroned "far above all rule and authority . . ." (Eph. i. 21). And it is the realm in which we are said to have a *spiritual* union with Christ (Eph. ii. 6).
7. Finally, it is the realm of a great spiritual warfare in which the Church is involved; "not with flesh and blood", that is, not literal warfare with earthly people, but with ". . . hosts of wicked spirits".

All this realm and what is there, is said to be "unseen". The seen is temporal and transient, but the unseen—the higher heavenly—is spiritual and eternal (II Corinthians iv. 18).

No one who has any real *spiritual* experience will ever question the reality of these unseen forces and the fact of this spiritual conflict.

But when we have said all this we have not touched or indicated the vital and essential occasion of it all. True it is that the real nature of this present dispensation was never revealed in former ages, but was "kept secret". Its introduction with Christ and its proclamation through Apostles was like dropping an atomic bomb into the centre of that ancient and deeply-rooted system. It started up something which disintegrated that system, and



NOVEMBER — DECEMBER, 1963

to this day it is broken to pieces. We have said that it is difficult to appreciate the shock and the implications of this disclosure of the Secret—"the mystery". We could only approximate to such understanding if we were to visualize the effects and results of a movement which by its chief representatives, to say nothing of its Originator, stood by the great St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome or the great St. Paul's Cathedral in London and proclaimed that this thing no longer stood in God's acceptance or recognition. That it belongs to an age which is past and gone. That the whole system represented by it has been supplanted by another which is not of tangible stones (John iv. 21-23), and not of earthly Orders, patronages, vestments, and ritual. That the day of the doom of it all is fixed (Matt. xxiv. 2; Heb. xii. 26, 27). That this is no longer—if ever it was—the *true* intention of God. The reactions to such pronouncements would be no less violent to-day than they were in Stephen's time.

All hell—"principalities and powers", etc.—are ever enraged to most vicious spite when the true implications of the significance of Christ in this dispensation are revealed and declared. Let us get nearer still to this matter. To the old Israel, with all its earthly order and claims, the Stewardship of the Mystery announced that *that* Israel was dismissed and displaced, and that a new, heavenly and spiritual Israel had been begun which was destined to become the one eternal and universal "Israel of God". That what the former Israel was intended to be in character and purpose within the limits of earth and time—but had failed to be and had forfeited its calling—this new Israel is to *universal* and *eternal* dimensions. Very few hints of *that* being in the counsels of God were given to Israel. Solemn and powerful warnings were given in plenty. They were not left without the knowledge of what God wanted of them. But this thing—the supplanting of that Israel and all its earthly system by another Israel "not of this world"—was hidden from their eyes. Jesus said to them: "The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. xxi. 43), and Peter later said that the Church of Christ is *that* holy nation (I Peter ii. 9).

If Israel of old was chosen to represent God among the nations; to rule for God among the nations; to be a light to the nations; to include the Gentiles in its blessing; and in all this failed utterly, in spite of all God's unbounded mercy, patience, entreaty and warnings, the new Israel,

with its 'Jerusalem above' (Gal. iv. 26; Heb. xii. 22), and its entire order a spiritual and heavenly one, takes its place, vocation, and purpose which God has from eternity determined to have. All this is included in such phrases as "according to his eternal purpose" (Eph. iii. 11), "the heavenly calling" (Heb. iii. 1), "so great salvation" (Heb. ii. 3), "the hope of his calling" (Eph. i. 18), "his inheritance in the saints" (Eph. i. 18), and many others. The eternal implications of all this as to the Church's destiny—the deposing of every other system, heavenly and earthly, which is opposed to God's Christ and God's Church—are the explanation of why anything or anyone relating to that eternal purpose becomes the object of the relentless antagonism of the evil powers. The less 'of this world', and the more 'of Heaven', so the more this spiritual hostility is met.

Now let us sum up.

Paul, the erstwhile embodiment of the whole Jewish or Israelitish system and tradition in more than an ordinary way, has—by a visitation from Heaven, a "heavenly vision" (Acts xxvi. 19) and "revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. i. 12)—come to see and to accept that that whole realm and nature of things has changed with the advent of the Christ: that the new and present "Israel of God" (Gal. vi. 16) is the Church founded and built upon Christ as 'the Foundation' and 'Chief Corner Stone' (Eph. ii. 20): that the "seed of Abraham" is not his natural seed, but Christ and those who are of faith in Jesus Christ (Gal. iii. 16): that the Land of Promise is now not an earthly country, but a heavenly (Heb. xi. 14): that the journey is not *now* an earthly walk, but a spiritual, though on the earth: that the City is "the Jerusalem which is above" (Gal. iv. 26): that the "Captain of the hosts of the Lord" (Joshua v. 14) and the King is "at the right hand of God" (Acts vi. 56) in the heavens. So also is the High Priest, who has completed all the sacrifices, and, in virtue of His own blood, makes intercession for the Saints. Further, he sees that "the middle wall of partition" between Jew and Gentile has been broken down, and "of the twain" God has created "one new man" (Eph. ii. 14, 15): that the synagogues have given place to the local churches: that the Elders of Israel are now displaced by the Elders of the churches: that the exclusiveness of Judaism has been destroyed to give place to the universality of Christ, His Gospel, and the Church. And finally, that the enemies which seek to obstruct the Church and 'withstand' its ultimate dominion in their realm are "principalities and



## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

powers, the world-rulers of this darkness, the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies" (Eph. vi. 12), and so on, and on. The whole realm, scene, nature and goal is changed.

It was no *small* revolution that came in with Christ, and was preached by Paul; which was, indeed, entrusted and committed to him in a special way and made his "Stewardship". The implications are immensely and intensely challenging. Christendom has almost entirely failed to apprehend this change and its devastating implications. Hence, there is all the phraseology and terminology without the consistent nature and expres-

sion, and therefore without the impact and power or authority.

The "Mystery"—the eternal Divine secret—is still veiled in many hearts, even though they have the New Testament in their hands. It was because of this that the Apostle felt the need to pray *for those who had received in word "the whole counsel of God"* (Acts xx. 27) that *they* might be given "a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the [full] knowledge of him, the eyes of [their] hearts being enlightened" (Eph. i. 17, 18). If that were necessary then, is it less so now?

(to be continued)

## FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

## OUT IN THE OPEN

**C**HUCK was a cheerful boy to look at, but he was unhappy in his heart. His real name was Charles, but in his home town in the United States his friends all called him Chuck. So did his mother. He had no father, or at least it was just as though he had none, for his parents were separated and divorced. He lived with his mother, who was kind enough, but who could not help him to find happiness, for she did not know the secret herself.

When an Evangelistic Campaign was started in his home town, crowds gathered night after night to hear the messages. Chuck thought that he might as well go to see what it was all about, so he went too. He was so attracted by the meeting that he went again the next night.

This time he really understood what was the matter with him. He was out of touch with God; had never been in touch, and did not know God personally at all. He was told what was the cure for his trouble. He needed to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour, so that he would not only find relief for his troubled conscience, but also come to know God as his own heavenly Father.

The preacher invited any who were wanting to talk and pray about their need to go up to the platform at the front. Chuck very much wished to do so, but as he saw a large number of people walking up the centre aisle between the seats, he realised that every eye was on them. That was what made it so hard. What would his school friends say? What would the neighbours say? Above all, what would his mother say when the news got back to her, which it would certainly do

in a small town where everybody knew him?

So Chuck remained in his seat, miserable because he knew that faith in the Lord Jesus would give him what he needed. Already he half believed, but he was not ready to confess that faith before others.

Chuck stayed in his seat that night, and he did the same the next night, with a big struggle going on inside him. Once again a good number of people went forward at the preacher's appeal, but he did not go. He was afraid! Or ashamed! He hardly knew which. How he longed to do it. So much so that he lay awake that night thinking about it. He was unhappy; he felt sure that he would find everything changed if only he could really step out and confess Christ; but still he knew that he could not do it.

Next morning, however, an idea came to him which he felt would help him to get right with God without exposing himself to everybody's gaze. He had noticed that quite a number of people had gone forward on the two previous nights, and they tended to move up the aisle crowding together in a group. Supposing he could get right into the middle of that group! He was quite short, and would easily be hidden by the men and women all around him. All he needed to do was to get in quickly, let the others gather round him, then all move together without any of the critical watchers realising that he was there.

That evening he reached the meeting in good time and took a seat near the aisle, determined that this time if an invitation were given he really would go forward. The Word of God was spoken

with real power that night ; the atmosphere seemed full of the presence of the Lord, and it might have been expected that a good number would respond. So much the better for Chuck. When the speaker made his appeal, he stepped boldly out, ready to hide himself in the middle of the group, and waited for the other enquirers to gather round him.

To his horror, nobody else rose. Had he moved too soon? No, the invitation was being repeated and people urged to come forward. Nobody stirred. There was Chuck, a lonely figure in the middle of the aisle, with—as it seemed—every eye on him. There seemed nothing to do now but to go through with it.

Step by step he moved forward, his cheeks burning and his heart beating fast. Would he never reach the end of that walk? At last he stood in front of the platform, still all alone, and there he confessed his new faith in Christ, not hidden in the crowd, as he had hoped, but in full view of everybody.

Do you feel sorry for him? There is no need. That was the best thing that could happen to him. It meant that he did what we must all do, make it quite plain that we are on the Lord's side. Ours must be a faith out in the open. Of course he was so filled with joy at knowing Christ as his Saviour that he did not care what other people thought of him. And the wonderful thing was that soon his mother also came to trust and know the Saviour for herself.

To-day Chuck is a missionary. From that first moment of coming out into the open with the Lord he has never looked back. It was at a Missionary Conference that I heard him tell his story and it made me pray that many of you who read these messages may step right out in open confession of Christ. Remember what the Lord Jesus said, "Every one, therefore, who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 10. 32).

H. F.

## PAUL'S TWO YEARS IN ROME

*"And he abode two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him" (Acts xxviii 30, 31).*

HERE in two verses is a clean-cut though condensed record of two years apostolic history. At the outset let us notice the striking contrasts, to which Conybeare and Howson eloquently call attention, afforded by this period of the apostle's life spent in Rome. The contrasts are between wealth, splendour, 'Nerolatry', a doomed empire and a decaying civilisation, a worn-out religion—and poverty, imprisonment, a new-born faith, and a King whose dominion is to become better established in the earth with each succeeding century. What are some of the more striking features that these two years of Paul present to us?

### 1. A FULFILLED PROPHECY AND AN ANSWERED PRAYER

The Master Himself had spoken to the apostle from the heavens on the day of the latter's conversion, declaring that he should bear the Name before "kings"; a prophecy that was in part fulfilled when he preached before Agrippa, and which

in a larger sense met its fulfilment when he made Christ known throughout the Prætorian Guard, and to the members of Cæsar's household (Acts ix. 15 ; Phil. i. 13, iv. 22). And it was in Corinth, on his third missionary tour, that the apostle expressed the hope of visiting Rome (Acts xix. 21). His prayer—for with him we cannot doubt that hopes and prayers were never separated—was at last answered ; but how differently from his probable expectation

### 2. A PRISON TRANSFORMED INTO A TEMPLE

Paul's hired house in Rome was virtually a prison, but it was a prison that was also a church. I have often thought that a book might be written on "prison temples"—veritable places of confinement whose walls have been glorified by preaching, praise, and prayer. Such was the Jerusalem prison in which Peter and John were confined ; the prison in Philippi wherein Paul and Silas sang hymns of praise at midnight ; the prison in Florence from which Savonarola went forth to his martyrdom ; Bedford jail, in which the "Pilgrim's Progress" was born. It is possible for each of us to use similarly the prison houses of adversity, sickness, bereavement, as places from which to sound forth gloriously the blessed Gospel. Adolph

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

Monod, we have been told, when unable to leave his room owing to illness, expounded from his sick-bed the way of life to his friends and neighbours. I recall a pathetic instance of a physician who became a Christian after he learned that he had a fatal malady, and who thereafter, until he was summoned hence, tried his best to lead his patients into spiritual as well as physical health. Let us master our limitations, as God's servants, not be mastered by them.

### 3. SPIRITUAL BOLDNESS

The last word but one of the Acts is *parresia*—boldness, descriptive of the quality of Paul's preaching while under the shadow of Nero's palace, and while the deeper shadow of his martyrdom was beginning its solemn approach. Are we preachers equally bold and courageous? We hear it charged that the American pulpit has elements of cowardice in it. Is this so? Do we fear the man in the front pew? I doubt if ministers of our day are really, as a class, lacking in true moral courage; but God help our country and the world if preachers of the Gospel ever become time-servers or cowards! And large room is offered every exponent of Christianity for courage in urging the claims of Christ upon his friends and kindred, and above all in living Christ in an age so strongly marked by commercialism and flippancy.

### 4. AN EXTRAORDINARY MAGNETIC PERSONALITY DEDICATED TO THE HIGHEST END

Paul was evidently one of those favoured individuals who are endowed by nature with what we term "personal magnetism". Immured in his house, with a soldier on guard, the champion of an unpopular cause, see his friends and neighbours seeking him out—a steady stream to and from his threshold—to hold spiritual communion with him. Here is a plain case of a "magnetic" preacher. Now what are the elements of such magnetism? I suggest these: health, enthusiasm, affectionateness. These are all contagious qualities of character, and the man who has them will be resorted to by others; and Paul had them all. He may not have been of robust physical health, but if so, its lack was supplied by abundant mental health, or sanity; and to this was added enthusiasm for

humanity and for God—he was a "God-intoxicated" man, with a native affectionateness tempered by evangelistic fervour. Such elements are bound to make any Gospel preacher magnetic; they are all subject to cultivation; they are all of the essence of a truly consecrated life. We have heard the remark concerning the late Dr Babcock, of the Brick Presbyterian Church, New York, that "he did not spare himself" when opportunities came his way of commending Christ to others. The same thing was true of Phillips Brooks. In other words, men of this class have loved men, and have been willing to take infinite pains in according them help; and surely in this vicinity lies the secret of what their admirers have characterized their 'magnetism'. God give us this sort of magnetism!

### 5. AN OBJECT-LESSON OF 'INDIVIDUAL WORK FOR INDIVIDUALS'

During these important two years Paul's preaching was not from a pulpit or platform, but was a receiving "all that went in unto him". In other words, it was commending Christ, and expounding the way of life, now to this individual and now to that; or at most preaching the kingdom to little groups of hearers. It is a question if the apostle did not win more converts through his individual touch throughout his ministry than he did by his formal sermons. His sermons could not be spared, and neither could his example of dealing with individuals according to his opportunity. . . . I once heard the late Howard Crosby make this utterance: "Do you know when New York city will be evangelized? I do. It will be when every church-member in the metropolis considers himself or herself an evangelist."

### 6. CONTINUOUSNESS IN GOSPEL SERVICE

"Two whole years". Doubtless there were hours of discouragement, moments of depression; but there was no turning aside from the Christ-appointed task. The preacher illustrated his own injunction, "Be not weary in well-doing". In these two years he himself was "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord". And with us preachers the steady, unwavering service—the pressing on toward the goal through months and years—must ever prove an element of ministerial success that we dare not overlook.

SELECTED



## GRASSHOPPER MEN

*"We were in our own sight as grasshoppers and so we were in their sight" (Numbers xiii. 33).*

OF course they were. If men insist on calling themselves grasshoppers other men are not likely to think of them as lions. These men were right in their estimate of themselves—they were genuine grasshopper men. Let us look at these words in their context in order that we may be able to see what a grasshopper man is and to understand something of the tragedy of his life.

These men were called and redeemed from the bondage of Egypt and baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea and drank of the spiritual rock which was Christ, and were under orders to possess a great land for God. Under these circumstances they were sent to spy out the land for the people preparatory to conquest. They went up and saw that the land was all that God promised it to be, but they also found that it was full of great walled cities indwelt by giants. The sight of these loomed so large in their vision and thinking that they had no eyes or mind for anything else. The more they saw these giants and the more they thought about them the smaller they became in their own sight. It was this testing that discovered them as grasshopper men.

### WHAT IS A GRASSHOPPER MAN?

The very simile used suggests the fundamental characteristic of the man. The grasshopper is a creature whose vision is normally on a horizontal line, the vision of an earth line. In this kind of vision near things look big and a far vision is impossible. You can test this by getting down on the ground in grasshopper shape and looking at an approaching man, or a near wall or a large building. From that angle an ordinary man looks like a giant and an ordinary wall impassable, and an ordinary building like a great mountain. If you would get up from the ground and find your way up to the top of this building and look down upon the ordinary man and wall, things would appear very different.

Therefore, the grasshopper man who views all life from the earth line loses his perspective in life. He has a wholly exaggerated idea of near things and a wholly inadequate conception of the things which give life its deepest meanings and measure its greatest possibilities. His terms of

value are flesh and blood, stone walls and fortified cities. He can never see or appreciate the moral and spiritual realities and purposes which after all are the mighty forces of life. These are the things that connect man up with the sources of great power. These men can see imperial Rome with all her military and political powers and think of an all-conquering force, but they cannot understand the irresistible power of a little group of ordinary unknown men who are possessed of a genuine experience of God and compelled by a spiritual message. They cannot see these spiritual forces on the earth line and therefore they cannot believe that they are or that they can be equal to the conquest of the military and political giants of the Roman Empire with all of its mighty cities.

### LACK OF PERSPECTIVE

Therefore the grasshopper man is the man who has lost his perspective in God's world—he sees everything from the earth line point of view. From that point of view he is never able to give the proper value to the moral and spiritual forces. Material things are more real to him than the spiritual realities which give its deepest meanings to life. Those men could see the giants and the walled cities, but they lost sight of the throne of God and its regal powers. From this angle they were so filled with the sense of the might of near things that they clean forgot what God did in Egypt and at the Red Sea. The grasshopper man has a poor memory when the crisis hour comes. The sight of big men and towering walls wipes out the memories of the glorious victories of the past. Having lost the vision of the throne he has lost the sense of its power. These men forgot who they were. They forgot they were called and sent of God. Forgetting the throne and the commission they lost their place in their world.

Having lost their bearings in their world they were not able to understand the times in which they were living. They were living in an hour when God was definitely moving forward to new and greater things. It was a crisis hour in the history of the world. The nations of Canaan had run their allotted time—the cup of their rebellion was full and they must give way to a people who were willing to move in the will of God. A nation understanding and moving in God's will and purpose could not fail. God was working both "to will and

## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

to do". Having willed, there was no question of His power to do. But men, looking at things on the earth line, could not understand this. Having lost sight of the throne they lost the sense of the presence and power of God. The things that filled their vision were spirit forces, but the grasshopper man did not have the discernment to see this. The grasshopper man is never able to rightly discern the times. He is out of touch with the throne and therefore lacks the insight that makes real the eternal forces and purposes which give history its final meanings and determine its course.

## THE GRASSHOPPER MAN IS A COWARD

As a result the grasshopper man is a coward. He did not have the courage to follow God's command and to accept the challenge of the compelling power of a life that is dominated by the throne and its authority, the sense of mission and destiny that blinds him to all obstacles standing in the way of the destined course—that thing that was in the mind of Lord Tennyson when he made one of his finest characters say,

For the deed's sake have I done the deed

In uttermost obedience to the King.

That is the utterance of a soul that feels carried along by a compelling sense of loyalty to the King and feels it must do what the King commands whatever the consequences. That was the thing that moved Paul and drove him on to Rome regardless of dangers. It was the thing that made Martin Luther irresistible as he stood in the midst of his enemies and the enemies of God's throne at Worms. It was the thing that gave courage and steadfastness to Abraham Lincoln during the dark days when the storms threatened to break the ship of State on the rocks of human selfishness. Caleb knew what it was when his righteous soul cried out against the cowardly advice of the grasshopper men, saying, "Let us go up at once and possess it: for we are well able to overcome it". There is nothing of the coward in that loyal challenge to obey the King.

## OBSTACLES TO PROGRESS

Because he is a coward the grasshopper man is in danger of holding back the movement of God's hosts in the day of conquest. He cannot defeat the ultimate purposes of God—the land must be taken, and if the grasshopper man is not willing to risk everything in obedience to the command of the King, God will raise up a generation who will do

it. But He must wait for the grasshopper man to die in the wilderness and to get out of the way of His on-moving chariot. In this case He had to pause for nearly forty years while the grasshopper men marked time in the wilderness. After they turned their back on the King and turned aside from His orders they had nothing to do but wait for death. They ran around a good deal and did a good deal of talking and complaining, but all their activity and dust-raising counted nothing for God and His purpose. It is a very solemn thing to disobey the commands of the throne and to turn from the God-given task to the barrenness of the wilderness.

## LACK OF VISION

That is the thing that men are in danger of doing in the fateful hour in which we are living. Men are looking too much along the earth line and are losing the vision of the throne and the regal compulsion that drives men to do exploits for the King.

## JESUS IS KING

Jesus, who is God manifest in the flesh, is the King of kings and Lord of lords. The making of Jesus King is not left to us. That was determined in the counsels of Deity. We are not asked as to whether or not we will have Him as King. We have positively no option in that matter. God settled that thing long ago. What we are asked to do is to recognize His Kingship—to submit to His government. Our mission as a church is not to ask people as to whether or not they shall have a King, or as to whether or not they like the idea of a King. Our mission is a mission of reconciliation. Our business is to beseech men everywhere to be reconciled to God in Christ. God is not going to be reconciled to our ideas or plans. We must be reconciled to His rule and accept His law. This is the word of the throne—"All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore". This is the command of a King—not a King in mere theory but a King in reality. "All authority hath been given" unto Him. Therefore the command is not to ask men as to whether or not they live what He has said or taught, but to teach them "to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you".

This is the King's commission given to the church in this age and she has no right to change it. The whole point of it is that Jesus has already been given all authority and therefore He com-

mands people to obey His commands. "All things whatsoever I commanded you"—that is a challenge to full-grown men. "Man am I grown, a man's work must I do." What is a man's work? "Follow the Christ, the King." That is the thing

the grasshopper man is not willing to do. He has lost the vision of the throne and he is looking along the earth line and near things look big and he is afraid.

J. M. McL.

## THE PEACE OF BETHLEHEM

POETS and artists have conspired to convey to a world that never tires of the wonderful story of the Nativity, hints of the mystery and wonder that give the cave-picture of Bethlehem its infinite suggestiveness, and yet its depths remain unexplored. Behind the still darkness of that night of nights there lies the darkness of a bankrupt world. Bethlehem has become the metropolis of its destiny. In the snow-cold silence, says a spiritual writer, one can hear the joints of a great world creaking. The decadence of Greece, the decline of Rome, the sullen blindness of Judæa, the dim groping of the nations beyond, are in that pulsing, pregnant darkness; and there is something pitiless in the cold stars keeping their rank in the heavens and looking down upon the great tragedy with blank, unwavering eyes. And if the darkness is heavy with things too deep for words, what of that little flower of light that has blossomed in the stable-cave? Is it indeed the ray destined to pierce and scatter the darkness? The world seems ripe for its Armageddon, and straining eyes look for a great warrior-star flashing from the North as a sword sharpened and furbished. The world longs for peace, but its wise men have realised that peace can only come by the sword. The deliverer of nations must be one whose flail is in his hand, and weary mankind must pass through the war that ends war. But instead of an Armageddon, a Child is born in Bethlehem, and it is concerning this Child that the heavenly soldiery sings of peace on earth as only those who have waged a holy warfare can sing. God had known and heard. Peace had descended as silently as a snowflake; while men slept, salvation has come to them. That is the answer of the Gospel to a world distraught—an answer veiling a challenge.

The picture tells us all this in Divinely, persuasive fashion, by marshalling before us the first worshippers of the Infant Christ. As we gaze from figure to figure, our souls bow before the mystery of reconciliation which links in the closest bonds of love men who are poles asunder by nature. There is the stable-cave, fitfully illuminated by a

wind-shaken lantern which, to anointed eyes, lights up unexplored regions of the Divine. Without, is the darkness, eloquent of that greater darkness which attracted the Light of the world, and the cold that is but a shadow of that greater cold that called forth the central fire of the Heart of God. Within, a legend of deep spiritual significance has bidden us see the ox and the ass—symbols in their inarticulate, pathetic meekness, not merely of the creation that groaneth and travaileth together in pain until now, but also of a world of men who have not yet learnt to lift a worshipful face to God, yet vaguely feel His subduing touch. And in the heart of the cave, Mary, the first worshipper at the manger—type of the God-surrendered soul—winsome in gentleness and humility, yet awful, too, in the utter simplicity of her unreserved obedience, telling us that man's sole dignity lies in the completeness of his response to grace.

Thus far the picture presents no sharp contrasts. The chill darkness without, the bare poverty within, and the suggestion of the dumb beasts of the field conveyed by the straw of the manger, accord well with the quality of Mary's soul. But in that country-side, some distance from the cave, a company of shepherds are keeping watch over their flocks tending their sheep well, but themselves shepherdless; representatives of the despised multitude upon which Christ had compassion. Upon them, of all the dwellers in that region, comes the angel of the Lord that night; upon them shines the glory that was veiled from Mary. Dazed, they listen to the good tidings of great joy; and as they listen, the skies above them are cloven, and the hosts of heaven acclaim their Prince in immortal song. Then the shepherds leave their flocks and go to Bethlehem to see and to wonder.

Here is contrast. The worship of the angels, grave in intellectual beauty, thrilling in its intensity of celestial love; and the dull, groping wonder that is the worship of those rough, startled men, are indeed continents apart. Yet, ere ever the shepherds saw the manger, a link was established



## A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

between them and the pure spirits of heaven. The Divine reconciliation, which is first of all a reconciliation between Heaven and Earth, had been anticipated, and the eager simplicity of the shepherds brought joy to the angels of God. This simplicity is their glory. They come to the call of God as their sheep would come to their own call. They come with a promptitude, a boldness, which is very near to God just because it is unaware of its nearness. Their antecedents are unknown, their subsequent history is lost in obscurity. For a brief moment the light of God has fallen upon them ; then the clouds close over them again. Yet they abide, perennial elements in the picture. They take their place beside Mary—she spiritualised and refined through long months of deep pondering and awful expectancy, they newly-awakened, precipitate, wondering greatly yet ignorant of the depth of that at which they wonder. And yet both fit equally into the picture as parts of one exquisite harmony. There is peace on earth when the elect soul of God's chosen and the eager, hungry heart of the wistful multitude meet in the presence of Jesus.

But other worshippers are on the way. The lofty heights as well as the lowly valleys are moved at His coming. Wise Men of the East whom legend has glorified with kingship—and, indeed, they are kingly souls—come up the starlit road, bringing in their hands the wealth of nations. Gold, frankincense, and myrrh—what riches of symbolic meaning has gathered about these gifts! And by whichever symbolism one may choose to interpret them, they stand for the achievements of wisdom, the products of wealth, the charm of culture, and the offering of the devout soul. Laden with a whole world's glory, the Wise Men bow before the Desire of all nations. Unwittingly they claim Him as the Lord of humanity, the Saviour of the world. They bring the wealth of ancient traditions and insights, of highly-developed civilisations and arts ; above all, of age-long spiritual experiments, to His shrine. They represent those who have sought God and consecrated massive and noble minds to that quest. "Both within Palestine and in the Greek-speaking countries about it", says Professor A. B. Davidson, "there were swellings of thought and need rising up from the deeps of men's hearts, and toiling onwards toward the centre, where Christ should be born."

The Wise Men of the East represent those in whom these swellings of a mighty tide had become conscious expression and intellectual formulation. Between them and the shepherds lies a whole world of thought and feeling ; yet both form one picture. The wisdom of the schools and the instinct of the multitude become one at the feet of Jesus ; a perfect congruity welds what once was disjoined into a unity of rich and beautiful suggestiveness.

Another type of worshipper approaches some days later. Simeon and Anna, dwellers for long years in the valley of expectancy, see at last the salvation of God. Cloistered souls, their life has been a garden enclosed. The world's happenings have not concerned them, the world's wisdom has only inspired them with misgiving. The Temple and the sure word of prophecy make up their world, and spiritual expectancy is the very breath of their being. Yet they, too, fit completely into the picture, beside the simple shepherds and the wise men. By virtue of their training, they probably regarded the shepherds as those who knew not the law, and were therefore unfit for the companionship of the spiritual ; they would certainly have looked upon the wise men and their heathen lore with the utmost suspicion. Yet, had they actually met them at the manger, would they not have instinctively understood? Would their hearts not have warmed and melted to kinship? We who have learnt Christ know that the picture is incomplete without those aged, saintly faces wrapt with hope fulfilled.

And the picture of the Nativity hangs not in the gallery of history, but in the gallery of life. It faces us every Christmastide, and goes with us through all the dreary days of conflict, at once a reproach and an inspiration. For this picture is not finished yet ; each year new worshippers are added and the circle of unity extended. To-day a bleeding world weary of war, and a weary Church exhausted with strife, look toward Bethlehem. Both are wondering how true peace shall come, and there are counsels heard within both that make for dispeace. But as we once more see Jesus, and bow in worship before Him, we become aware of the things that belong to our peace. In that vision lies the secret which statesmen and ecclesiastics seek after. To recover that vision for ourselves and the world, is to come to that tree of life whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.

SELECTED

NOVEMBER — DECEMBER, 1963

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We acknowledge with gratitude the following gifts received during August and September, 1963.

Apeldoorn, Holland £1 ; Ardrishaig £3 ; Barry £1 ; Bassendean, Australia £1 10s.; Bedford, Indiana £5 6s 5d.; Belfast 10s.; Berkhamsted 10s.; Berlin, Germany 9s., £1, £1 ; Bridgwater £8 ; Brighton 10s.; Bristol £1 ; Chesterfield £1 ; Colombes, France £2 ; Crewkerne £1 ; Deal 5s.; Doncaster 4s.; Dowlais 10s. 6d.; Dublin £1 ; Eastbourne £1 7s. 6d.; Edinburgh 10s.; Findon 10s.; France £10 ; Glasgow £2 ; Gullane £1 ; Haslemere £2 ; Hounslow £1 ; Kaleden, Canada 19s. 7d.; Leeds £1 ; London, S.E.9—10s.; S.E.15—10s.; S.E.21—10s.; S.E.23—5s., 10s., 10s., £1, £1, £1, £5, £5 ; S.W.4—£2 ; S.W.20—£5 ; W.12—10s.; Malton 3s. 11d., 14s.; Manchester 10s.; Neuchâtel, Switzerland £1 ; Northampton £3 3s.; Northwood £1 ; Norwich £5 ; Oldham £5 ; Port Jervis, New York £2 1s. 2d.; Pretoria, South Africa £2 10s.; Redruth £4 15s. 3d.; Rhyl £1 ; Rickmansworth 5s.; Salzburg, Austria 10s.; Seymour, Australia £5 ; Sica-mous, Canada £1 9s. 7d.; Singapore £5 ; South-ampton 10s., 10s.; Trelewis £1 ; Winchester £1 12s. 3d.; Wooler 10s.; Worthing £2  
Total £119 11s. 2d.

Chicago, Ill. \$10 ; Cleveland, Ohio \$5 ; Council Bluffs, Iowa \$3.78 ; Flagstaff, Ariz. \$1 ; Flushing, N.Y. \$20 ; Fremont, Nebr. \$1 ; Harrisonburg, Va. \$1 ; Louisville, Ky. \$10 ; Minneapolis, Minn. \$5 ; Mobile, Ala. \$5 ; Monrovia, Calif. \$2 ; New York, N.Y. \$200 ; North Hollywood, Calif. \$5 ; Nyack, N.Y. \$1.25 ; Philadelphia, Pa. \$1 ; Silsbee, Texas \$3 ; Trussville, Ala. \$3 ; Valley Station, Ky. \$10  
Total \$287.03

Christchurch, New Zealand N.Z. £3. 0. 0.

Toronto, Ont. C.\$2.00

Strasbourg, France Fr. Fcs. 15.00 ; Montpellier, France 100.00  
Total Fr. Fcs.115.00

Colombes, France Sw. Fcs. 20.00 ; Illkirch, France 10.00 ; Strasbourg, France 20.00, 10.00 ; Amstelveen, Holland 12.00 ; Berne, Switzerland 10.00 ; Glarus, Switzerland 10.00 ; Gümligen, Switzerland 10.00, 10.00 ; Neuchâtel, Switzerland 10.00 ; Niederbipp, Switzerland 10.00 ; Schlieren, Switzerland 10.00, 20.00 ; Wolhusen, Switzerland 20.00 ; Zürich, Switzerland 20.00  
Total Sw. Fcs. 202.00

The wording of the

## MOTTO for 1964

is as follows:—

“ . . . The GOD and FATHER . . .

WHO WORKETH

ALL THINGS

AFTER THE COUNSEL

OF HIS OWN WILL . . .

. . . to the PRAISE of HIS GLORY . . .”

Large: 6d. each (5/6 a dozen)

Postage and packing: on 1—5d.; on 2 to 6—6d.; on 12—8d.

Small: 3d. each (2/6 a dozen)

Postage and packing: on 1 to 12—4d.; on 13 to 36— 5d.

Write to:—

WITNESS AND TESTIMONY PUBLISHERS,  
30, Dunoon Road,  
Forest Hill, London, S.E. 23.

## WITNESS AND TESTIMONY LITERATURE

---

*By T. A-S.*

GOD'S REACTIONS TO MAN'S DEFECTIONS . . . . .	7/- (\$1.50)
RIVERS OF LIVING WATER . . . . .	6/- (\$1.28)
PROPHETIC MINISTRY . . . . .	5/6 (\$1.18)
OUR WARFARE . . . . .	4/6 (\$0.96)
PIONEERS OF THE HEAVENLY WAY . . . . .	4/6 (\$0.96)
THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO PAUL . . . . .	4/6 (\$0.96)
WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CHRISTIAN . . . . .	4/6 (\$0.96)
FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE . . . . .	4/6 (\$0.96)
THE GOLD OF THE SANCTUARY . . . . .	4/- (\$0.85)
THE CENTRALITY AND UNIVERSALITY OF THE CROSS . . . . .	3/- (\$0.64)
WE BEHELD HIS GLORY (VOL. II) (cloth boards)	4/6 (\$0.96)
(Art paper covers)	3/6 (\$0.75)
THE BATTLE FOR LIFE . . . . .	2/6 (\$0.53)
GOD'S SPIRITUAL HOUSE . . . . .	1/6 (\$0.32)
THE WORK OF GOD AT THE END TIME . . . . .	1/6 (\$0.32)
HIS GREAT LOVE . . . . .	1/6 (\$0.32)
THE SCHOOL OF CHRIST . . . . .	1/6 (\$0.32)
UNION WITH CHRIST . . . . .	1/6 (\$0.32)
GOD HATH SPOKEN . . . . .	1/- (\$0.21)
THE ULTIMATE ISSUE OF THE UNIVERSE . . . . .	9d (\$0.16)
THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT . . . . .	6d (\$0.11)
THE WATCHWORD OF THE SON OF MAN . . . . .	4d (\$0.07)
BETHANY . . . . .	3d (\$0.05)
THE SUPREME VOCATION . . . . .	3d (\$0.05)
CHRIST—ALL, AND IN ALL . . . . .	3d (\$0.05)
CHRIST IN HEAVEN AND CHRIST WITHIN . . . . .	2d (\$0.04)
THE ARM OF THE LORD . . . . .	2d (\$0.04)

THE GOD OF THE AMEN . . . . .	2d (\$0.04)
THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA . . . . .	1/6 a dozen (\$0.32)
THE CROSS OF CHRIST ( <i>The Zero hour of the Creation</i> ) . . . . .	1d (\$0.02)
THE BATTLEGROUND OF THE SOUL . . . . .	1d (\$0.02)
A GOD THAT HIDETH HIMSELF . . . . .	1d (\$0.02)

*By G.P.*

THE GOSPEL IN THE FARMYARD ( <i>For the Children. 110 pages. Illustrated</i> ) . . . . .	4/- (\$0.85)
GOSPEL MESSAGES FROM THE ANTARCTIC ( <i>For the Children 170 pages. Illustrated</i> ) . . . . .	5/- (\$1.07)

*By H.F.*

THE CHURCH'S PRAYER AND SPIRITUAL INCREASE . . . . .	2d (\$0.04)
THE REALITY OF GOD'S HOUSE . . . . .	2d (\$0.04)
THE CHURCH AS GOD WANTS IT TO-DAY . . . . .	2d (\$0.04)
THE CHALLENGE OF THE IMPOSSIBLE . . . . .	2d (\$0.04)
}	1/6 a dozen (\$0.32)
READY FOR THE KING ( <i>For the Children. 48 pages. Illustrated</i> ) . . . . .	1/6 (\$0.32)
ON WINGS OF FAITH ( <i>For the Children. 52 pages. Illustrated</i> ) . . . . .	2/- (\$0.43)
BURIED TREASURE ( <i>For the Children. 48 pages. Illustrated</i> ) . . . . .	2/- (\$0.43)

*By W.N.*

<i>An extract from</i> THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE . . . . .	3d (\$0.05)
---	-------------

*By W.L.*

A GOD WHO HIDES HIMSELF . . . . .	2d (\$0.04)
-----------------------------------	-------------