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A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

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EDITORIAL

WITH this issue of the little paper we enter upon one more year of its ministry. To have 'continued unto this day' is a testimony to the faithfulness of God in the 'help received', for, indeed, behind these forty-seven years there is a history of His wonderful grace and sustaining! More than that, as we review the way travelled with Him, we are deeply impressed with the growth downward, upward, and outward of the ministry. It was a simple beginning those years ago, when the message of the Cross was fresh (with us), born out of a revolutionary crisis. That has remained basic, but the light has increased and 'the open heaven' has brought ever greater fullnesses of light as to God's eternal counsels. I think that it is not only the natural sense of shortening time and the "course" being far run that makes us feel that His Coming must be getting very near, but rather does it seem that things just cannot go on as they are doing indefinitely. On one side the "cup of iniquity" is fast filling up. The challenge to the very existence of God or of His rights is extending and intensifying so greatly that He will answer it when the "cup" is full. At the other end there is such a great intensifying of evangelism—even if of a broad and elementary nature—expressive of the great "drag-net" which, by its various means—

evangelists, radio, literature, etc.—seems to mean that the world must, at least, have heard the Gospel of Christ. Between these two poles two other features are noticeable. There is the great cry for reality which is having the effect of shaking and discrediting much of traditional Christianity. There is also a very intense testing of the faith of the true people of God. This last is shown in the Scriptures to be truly characteristic of the end time. It is in this last context that we feel that our ministry relates.

Recently a dear soul wrote to us asking that the paper should no longer be sent because (it was alleged) we do not teach the Second Coming of the Lord. The fact is that for these forty-seven years all this ministry has had definitely in view the preparation of believers for His return! Attendance at our conferences through the years would have left no doubt about this, when, at the end of the last gathering the conference has reached its peak of joy and glory in the singing of a hymn of His coming again. And, by the way, is not that atmosphere of glory the answer to every argument on the matter? The Holy Spirit is not the Spirit of time, but outside of time. Not of fixed dates, but of heaven's "hour". Not of "a thousand years",

but of eternity. He is "the *Eternal Spirit*"; therefore *He* lives now in that dateless "day". Thus, whenever we speak or sing of the Lord's coming, it is not only the hope that inspires, but the Holy Spirit bears witness and is present as the Spirit of Glory. Some of us in early childhood were told that 'the Lord may come tonight'. All those who said that have been in their graves for many years, but still the *teaching* has gone on. Still He tarries. But His sure coming is a very special ground for the Holy Spirit's witness. This answers all possible scepticism and that "Where is the promise of his coming, for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning". It is the Holy Spirit who says through the Apostle Peter: 'Thou fool, know ye not that a thousand years is as but a day with God, and a day as a thousand years.' Time is out of it with the Spirit, and His *witness of life* is the answer. But He *will* come, and "In my heart I have the witness that His coming draweth nigh".

So, to have as much spiritual maturity at His appearing, or at our appearing before Him, we will pursue our little part and aspect of ministry.

Appreciating everything other that can serve the ultimate purpose, we just seek to have grace to 'fulfil the ministry which *we* have received of the Lord'. What this new year holds we do not know. Perhaps some of us will be with Him, or it may be that His elect will have been caught up *together* to meet Him ere the year closes. We do solicit your prayers, as this ministry does not go on unchallenged.

There *is* much and widespread hunger amongst the Lord's people, but there are *many* and *strong* adversaries to their receiving true bread!

So much gratitude is due to the many friends who have strengthened our hands by their prayers, their expressions of appreciation, and in other ways. I cannot write to you all individually, but I want you to know that you are not just lost in the crowd. I know full well that I could not have gone on without your help.

The Lord bless you very greatly this year.

Yours in His grace,
T. AUSTIN-SPARKS.

P.S. Mrs. Sparks and my helpers in the office join with me in greetings and gratitude.—T. A.-S.

FAITH OPERATING IN A DARK DAY

OUR motto for 1970 circles round the declaration of Jeremiah in chapter xxxii. verse 17 of his prophecies:

"Ah, Lord Jehovah . . . there is nothing too hard (wonderful) for thee."

This declaration was made in circumstances of extreme difficulty. Recall that situation.

Jeremiah was himself in prison, perhaps in a dungeon. His ministry, after forty years, was in a state of suspense, perhaps finished personally. Jerusalem was besieged by the Chaldeans, and about to be taken, and the land overrun and destroyed. The people were about to be taken into far captivity, and Jeremiah knew that it would be for seventy years.

In that seemingly hopeless situation the Lord told Jeremiah that his cousin Hanamel would be coming to him as the next of kin who had the right of redemption to ask Jeremiah to buy—redeem—the family land, the field in Anathoth. It may have been a bit of shrewd business on the part of Hanamel, for Jeremiah might most likely be killed and the field be lost if it had not been redeemed. Perhaps Hanamel was not accepting Jeremiah's gloomy

prophecies and still believed that the country would be saved. However, for Jeremiah it was another situation; his prophecies were—he knew—going to come true. To buy the field was either foolhardiness or faith. He proceeded in faith, and carried out the transaction meticulously; and he left no question as to whose right it was. So Hanamel had been, and the Deed of Purchase was signed, sealed, and settled. Jeremiah, by right of redemption, was the owner of a field which, for long years, would lie under the heel of a foreign power. For *himself*, he knew that he would never occupy it. Was he—maybe—enacting a parable which had a far greater context? Was the far-seeing Spirit of God making Jeremiah's action a prophecy? Was there Another Redeeming Kinsman in the shadows of Jeremiah's transaction, One who would redeem His rightful inheritance and have to wait long years, while the enemy—the prince of this world—ruled in it? Was Jeremiah just yielding to the pressure of circumstances?

No, two things governed his action. One, God had told him to buy the field, and his dream, vision, verbal intimation (whatever it was) concerning Hanamel had come to pass. Two, his own pro-

species had contained a break in the far-distant horizon, seventy years hence, and that was a ray of hope in the dark present. On that streak of light his faith acted, and, not thinking of himself, he acted for posterity. Someone has spoken of his action as "faith staking a claim". But, as is usually the case, faith was tested by

REACTION

Jeremiah suffered this come-back. He seems to have come alive to the implications of what he had done, and a battle took place. He had to call to his help the omnipotence and sovereignty of God. "Ah, Lord, Jehovah, behold, thou hast made the heavens and the earth by thy great power and by thine outstretched arm; there is nothing too hard for thee."

This, surely, is a foreshadowing of "the faith of the Son of God".

Now, there are some valuable lessons for us in this incident:

1. There are times when we are so sure that the Lord has led us in a certain way, to take a certain course, to do a certain thing, or to a certain purpose. It comes to us with much life and assurance. At the time there seems to be real corroboration that it is of the Lord. Even our Hanamels turn up on time. We make our committal, set ourselves to the call or demand, and faith is all agog. Then, we are invaded by the adverse forces, like the prison in which we are found, or like the armies of the Chaldeans besieging. The temptation is to wonder if we have been mistaken, misled, and a trick has been played on us. A battle in the dark ensues and the whole question of the faithfulness of God is raised.

How true to history it is that the Lord's people, and His servants in particular, can never take a position with Him without—sooner or later—being tested severely by that very position! That important factor in Jeremiah's action must be borne in mind. Jeremiah acted without any *personal interest* influencing him. He was detached from his action, for he knew that he would not live to see the redemption made good. Faith was selfless and looked

beyond his own lifetime. That is a very real test of its genuineness. Such thoughts never weakened his action! Perhaps the very reactions and assaults of doubt are only allowed in order to test the quality of faith.

A dungeon and an enemy host are sufficient to test the reality of vision!

2. "While we look, not at the things that are seen, but at the things which are not seen."

Jeremiah had an overwhelming amount of the impossible, the "too hard" in his seen situation. It would have been so easy at any time to surrender to existing conditions. Every servant of God who has been given "the heavenly vision", and been made acquainted with God's "eternal purpose" has, after a thoroughgoing committal, and some encouraging corroborations, come to the tune of severe testing by circumstances which raise ultimate questions. The conditions argue that it is a vain hope; life will pass in disappointment.

Think of the vision of Peter, John, Paul, and then consider the state of the churches. They must have had some vision which eclipsed and transcended "the things which are seen". Paul said: ". . . we *look* at the things which are *not* seen." "Things", not imaginations, makebeliefs, vapours, but actual things not seen. These are the "eternal" and, like Jeremiah, the horizon of realization is beyond this hour.

How easy—to our time-fettered life—it would be to say that the Church is in ruins and irreparable; we labour in vain if we pour our lives out for the ideal! Well, the saints of old, the Prophets, the Apostles, and above all, our Lord Jesus in His humiliation, rebuke us. "Faith is the title deeds of things not seen." Jeremiah with the Deeds of Anathoth fits right in there.

Jeremiah linked this whole issue with God's Throne. This is the refuge of the sorely tried in faith. "There is nothing too hard for thee."

3. We must ask the Lord to, first, cleanse our hearts of all personal, and worldly motives and interests; to plant the Cross fairly and squarely in our soul-ambition, and then enable us to "buy the field" in confidence.

GOD'S NEW ISRAEL

3. THE FOUNDATION LAW OF GOD'S NEW ISRAEL

"And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be

thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him.

saying, *As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be the father of a multitude of nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for the father of a multitude of nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land of thy sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. And God said unto Abraham, And as for thee, thou shalt keep my covenant, thou, and thy seed after thee throughout their generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; every male among you shall be circumcised*" (Genesis xvii. 1-10).

"For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Romans ii. 28, 29).

"In whom ye were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead" (Colossians ii. 11, 12).

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died; and he died for all, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again" (II Corinthians v. 14, 15).

"For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Philippians iii. 3).

THE COVENANT OF SEPARATION AND DISTINCTIVENESS

WE ought to add other Scriptures to those, for there are many more which are of the same nature, but these are sufficient to bring us to the point of our consideration, which is the foundation law of God's Israel, the law of God's covenant, and that covenant is symbolized in circumcision. The sign of the covenant with Abraham was circumcision. In

the Old Testament it was literal and material. In the New Testament it is spiritual, but the meaning is the same. It is a spiritual law of God's Israel, and that law is separation and distinctiveness. It lays down the law that God's Israel is a separate people; separate from all other people, and different from all other people—clearly distinguished from all other people. Did you notice, as we read those Scriptures, that God said to Abraham that He would make many nations out of his seed? Now God is taking out of the nations a people for His Name, something *in* the nations, but separate *from* the nations, and that law of separation and difference is the foundation of God's Israel.

We can see God keeping to that law in the Old Testament. It is written that "the God of glory appeared unto . . . Abraham," when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, and said unto him, *Get thee out!*" (Acts vii. 2). Later, Moses was in Egypt, and God just sovereignly took him out before He did anything else. Moses had to be out of Egypt first, and that was a very thorough thing, as you would think if you were out in a wilderness for forty years! Then the Lord sent Moses back into Egypt to get the people out, and the Word is: "Out of Egypt did I call my son" (Matthew ii. 15). God could not proceed with His purpose until He had got His people out, for there is a place where God will fulfil His purpose, and *He will not fulfil it anywhere else*. I would like you to put a lot of lines under that statement, for I think it is the key to everything. Let me say it again: there is a place where God will fulfil His purpose, and He will do it nowhere else. God means business. He is a God of purpose, and He is very serious about His purpose, which is a purpose of blessing. To Abram He said: "I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee . . . and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis xii. 2, 3). God's purpose is a purpose of blessing; blessing to the instrument that He will use and to the people to whom He uses that instrument. "I will bless *thee* . . . and *thou* shalt be a blessing." That is the purpose of God, and I say it with a strong voice, because I know that some will say: 'If we are going this way it is going to be a very difficult way. We are going to have to give up everything!' Well, wait a little while—we have not finished yet!

We make this statement: God's purpose is to bless and to make a blessing, but it demands a position. The blessing and the vocation depend upon where we are. Of course, in the Old Testament it was literal. Abraham was in Ur of the Chaldees, and God said: 'You must get out of this city. I am

not going to do anything here! I must have you somewhere else.' In the New Testament it is spiritual. Where do you live? In Bern, in Zürich, in New York, in London, in Paris, or in some other city? God is not saying to you: 'Get out of Paris!' or any of these cities, but He *is* saying, just as forcefully: 'Get out!' You may be living in your body in a city, but you may not find your life there. You may have been born there, physically, but now, as a true Israelite, you were never born there. You were born from above.

God's covenant is bound up with this spiritual position, and we must really take serious notice of this. God has made a covenant with His Israel, but that covenant demands that they are *out* of somewhere and *in* somewhere else, and for us that means a different spiritual position. God's covenant is a covenant of blessing, of life, of service—that is, Divine vocation—but all that blessing, that life and that vocation are bound up with this matter of spiritual position. Spiritually we are out and we are different. That first Israel is not now in blessing, nor in life, nor is it in the Divine vocation. It is where the Lord Jesus said it would be if it rejected Him—in outer darkness, where there would be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, and for these many centuries the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem has fulfilled that prophecy! Why is that? There is one little fragment of Scripture which is tremendous but it has a terrible statement in it: "The covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; *which my covenant they brake*" (Jeremiah xxxi. 32). Israel broke the covenant of separation and distinctiveness.

A CIRCUMCISED HEART

Now we come to this matter of circumcision. I can only touch it very lightly, for it is a very delicate matter.

We have seen that in the Old Testament circumcision is a type, or symbol, for in the New Testament it is stated that circumcision is of the *heart*—not in the flesh, but in the spirit—and it just means this: a heart that is *wholly* devoted to the Lord. By that symbol the seed of Abraham became God's exclusive people for the time being, and everything that we have in the Old Testament about God's wish for this people shows us how jealous He was over those people. God called Himself their husband (Jeremiah xxxi. 32), and there was never a more jealous husband than He! Let Israel have anything to do with any other husband and you will hear

the thunder, and the weeping, of the Prophets! God was so jealous for Israel.

Now see what Paul says about the covenant seed of Abraham. He heads this whole thing up into Christ: "Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not, And to *seeds* as of many; but as of one, And to thy *seed*, which is *Christ*" (Galations iii. 16). "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew (or an Israelite), which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit." So Jesus Christ is the seed of Abraham, and Paul speaks of the circumcision of Christ.

Let me ask you a question: Has there ever lived on this earth a person more *utterly* committed to God than the Lord Jesus? He was indeed separated unto God, and different from all others. No one has ever borne the marks of spiritual circumcision more than the Lord Jesus. He was the Man of the undivided heart.

Let us go back into the Old Testament to that great Messianic chapter, Isaiah liii: "He shall see his seed . . . He shall see of the travail of his soul." Well, we know more than the Prophet Isaiah knew about that! We have been with Him in Gethsemane in the time of the travail of His soul, and we are with Him on the other side of the travail. How many are the seed of Christ since then! Dear friends, if ever you are tempted to think that Christians are few, and that we are only a very small people in the millions of this world—open the windows! Look into the book of the Revelation: "A great multitude, which no man could number . . . ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands." The number cannot be expressed in human language—and they have been gathered since the travail of the Lord Jesus. He is indeed seeing His seed! Gethsemane has been the most fruitful garden in all history—and you and I are of His seed! We are born out of His travail and are in the covenant made with the new Israel.

But do remember that the meaning and the value of the covenant depend upon our devotion to the Lord! This is a thing which is so evident: the greatest fruitfulness has always come from the lives most devoted to the Lord, the people of the *undivided* heart. This covenant has two sides. As we have already said, the New Testament takes many warnings from the history of Israel, and we may fail of all that that covenant means if our hearts are divided and we try to live in two worlds. Let us look at a little incident in the life of Abraham.

It is in chapter xv., when God came to make His covenant with Abraham and his seed, and

something happened which many people have not been able to understand. The Lord commanded Abraham to bring certain things for a sacrifice either to a large altar, or to two altars, for the Lord told him to divide the sacrifices in two and to put one half on one side and the other half on the other side. Now notice that these are two sides of the covenant. On the one side is Abraham and his seed and on the other side is God. God is about to enter into a covenant with Abraham and his seed, but the covenant has two sides. Now notice what happens! The vultures came down to try and steal the sacrifices. How greatly significant this is! All the powers of darkness are against this covenant, and all those evil fowls of the air are out to rob God and His people of this covenant. It says that Abraham beat them off. His rod was busy that day, and the vultures said: 'It is no good. We had better give up and get away from here.' Then Abraham went to sleep and "an horror of great darkness fell upon him". My point, and, I believe, *the* point of the Scripture is this: there is always a terrible battle with hell to secure a life utterly committed to God. No one who is going to be utterly for Him is easily won.

It may be that battle is going on in this very room. If the devil can prevent you from being utterly for God he is going to make a great big fight for it. Is that battle going on? The battle of the very covenant, the covenant in heart circumcision, a heart wholly for the Lord, a heart that is right out for God. If Satan can prevent that he will put up a good fight. What is your attitude to this? Are you careless about it? God alone knows how much is involved in it. Oh, take the rod of God and lay about these evil forces! Stand for the covenant! And when you have made that stand the evil forces will withdraw, the darkness will go.

There is a change of atmosphere in this story. At first the atmosphere is full of conflict and fear, for it is "an *horror* of great darkness". There is a battle in the very atmosphere over this matter, but when Abraham has fought the battle for the covenant the whole atmosphere changes and becomes one of victory. If we put the history of many consecrated believers into this story, there would be many testimonies like this: 'My, there was a tremendous battle over this matter! I was full of fears, but I took a stand, and with God's help I came to a decision. I stepped over on to God's side of the covenant and said: "Lord, I am *Yours!* I am with *You!*" Then peace came, the peace of His victory. I went to bed that night feeling as though I had come out of a great battle, but it was into great peace.'

That is all in this little story in Genesis xv. It may be your story! This is something of what it means to have a heart that is circumcised, for a circumcised heart is a heart set free from all self-interest. Was that true of Abraham? After many years what had seemed impossible came to pass, and God gave him a son; and that son was God's miracle. You would expect Abraham to say: 'God gave me that son and I am going to hold on to him. I will never let him go, because God gave him to me.' There was a little boy once, and a baby came into the home. One day the mother said to the little boy: 'We are going to take Baby to the meeting and give him to the Lord.' The little boy's face fell, and he said: 'Mummy, you can *lend* him to the Lord, but we must have him back again!' You know, that is the kind of consecration that a lot of Christians make; they have some personal interest in their consecration. But about that God-given gift to Abraham God said: 'Take him and offer him!' Friends, learn this lesson! Do not think that because God has given you something by a miracle you can take it for yourself. I will not try to say what it might be. It might be your very ministry, for there is always a peril of taking our ministry and using it for ourselves. But Abraham was truly circumcised in heart, and the same was true of Hannah. How long she waited for that child, Samuel, and how much she suffered! How earnestly she prayed! And then, at last, God gave her the child. What did she say? 'Thank you, Lord. I will never let this child go now!'? No, she said: 'For this child I prayed and the Lord has given me my request. Therefore I have *given* him to the Lord for as long as he lives.' She, too, was circumcised in heart.

From some of his Psalms we know that the one great ambition of David's life was to build the temple, and he worked and sacrificed for that temple. He said: "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. 3-5). He was collecting private money, as well as materials for the temple, for he said: "I have a treasure of mine own of gold and silver" (I Chronicles xxix. 3). Then he received the pattern of the temple from the Lord, and said: 'The time has come, and my life's ambition is about to be realized. The one thing for which I have lived is now going to be mine—but what is that? Someone is at the door. Come in! Oh, it is a Prophet. Yes, my friend, what have you come to say?' 'I have come to tell you from the Lord, David, that you shall not build

the house. Thy son shall build it.' What did David do? What would you do? Well, what *did* David do? He said: 'It does not matter about my disappointment! The thing is that the Lord must have what *He* wants. *My* interests are nothing beside *His* interests.' So he gave everything to Solomon. Perhaps he had

seen something more: "And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever" (Psalm xxiii. 6), and that is better than any earthly house!

We never lose anything when the Lord has everything, and that is what it means to have a circumcised heart. May that be true of everyone!

(To be continued)

"THE WORD OF HIS POWER"

"They obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the Lord their God had sent him; and the people did fear before the Lord" (Haggai i. 12).

THE word of the Cross is the power of God, and in this verse we have read about a powerful word, the result of which was: "they obeyed" and "they feared". What was it they obeyed and feared? A powerful word from God. And what was that like? There were the words of the prophet, but there was something more—there was the voice of the Lord.

THE VOICE OF THE LORD

There is one verse in the tenth chapter of the Gospel by John which we all know by heart: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they, follow me" (verse 27). "I am the good shepherd . . . My sheep hear my voice . . . and they follow me." Here again is a powerful word, and when we hear it we follow the Lord, for it is His voice.

There is a word in Isaiah 1v. which we often use falsely. In past days, when I have given a very cheap and thin message, I have given myself this false comfort: 'However, the word of the Lord shall not return void!', but Isaiah does not give us that comfort at all. The Lord says: "My word that goeth forth *out of my mouth* shall not return unto me void" (verse 11), and the question is not whether the word went out from my mouth (it always does!) but—did it go out from the *Lord's* mouth? If it only comes out of my mouth you only hear my voice, and therefore the sheep do not follow the Lord. My mouth can give no powerful word at all. But if the word comes out of the Lord's mouth, then the sheep hear His voice. Therefore always ask this question: 'Did my word go out from the mouth of the Lord? Am I the mouthpiece of the Lord?' Only He is capable of a powerful word,

for He speaks in the spirit of the Cross. When in John x: 27 the Lord says: "My sheep hear my voice", you cannot take that word out of its context. Four times before that verse He has said—in verses 11, 15, 17 and 18: "I give my life for the sheep . . . I lay down my life for the sheep. . . . No one takes my life away from me . . . I lay it down of myself." 'I give My life, and then I speak'—and that is the voice of the Lord, that is the word of the Cross, and that is the word of His power. "I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again." Therefore the Lord has a powerful word, and it is the word of the Cross.

THE MESSAGE AND THE MESSENGER

The Lord not only gave His message, but He gave Himself, and those two things always go together to make the word of the Cross. The messenger and the message are synonymous. That was the secret behind the power of the Apostle Paul. In Thessalonians he says: "We were well pleased to impart unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls" (I Thessalonians ii. 8). That made it a very powerful word, and therefore he continues: "When ye received from us the word of the message, even the word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God" (I Thessalonians ii. 13). The Thessalonians heard the words of Paul and the voice of Jesus. They heard the word of the crucified One through one who was able to say not only: 'I *was* crucified with Christ', but "I *am* crucified with Christ" (Galatians ii. 20). It is one thing to look back on the historic fact that the Lord Jesus took us with Him to His Cross and there we *were* crucified with Him, but it is another thing to be able to say in truth: 'I *am*, while I speak to you, crucified with my Lord.' How can you give the word of the Cross without being on the Cross as you speak?

MINISTRY AND SERVICE

All this has to do with our conception of what ministry and service really are. What is service? It is not doing something for the Lord, but doing His will. Most Christians are ready to do something for the Lord, but I doubt whether we are all ready to do His will. The Lord Jesus has given us His own definition of ministry, of service, in John xii. 26: "If any man serve me, *let him follow me.*" That is all! Ministry, or service, is nothing other than obedience—and obedience might well cost you everything, even your own life. I am sure that our dear brother Abraham was willing to do anything for the Lord except bring his son to Mount Moriah! Abraham might easily have argued with the Lord and said: 'I can serve You in many ways, Lord', and the Lord would have answered: "There is only one way in which you can serve Me, and that is by doing what I tell you to do." Ministry, service, obedience and life are one and the same thing.

Here comes the word of His power. If Abraham had spoken a thousand words and preached wonderful sermons without going to Mount Moriah, then the people would have heard the words of Abraham but not the voice of the Lord. It would not have been the word of the Cross, and it would not have been a powerful word.

Here is the centre of things. The word of Abraham has power even today, and we can sense the voice of the Lord in it. That is because Abraham's word went forth out of the mouth of the Lord, and it did not return void to the Lord. That is ministry, and that is why those who have ears that can hear can easily discern the voice of the Lord when they listen. Two men can speak and give almost the same message, and with one you sense the voice of the Lord, but with the other you hear only the words of the man. In my country people speak a lot about power in these days, and many use all the power of their voices and think: 'Now my message is powerful!' Abraham might have been able to cry out so loudly that they could have heard it back in Ur, but there would have been no power in that. When he went to Mount Moriah he did not even raise his voice, but the power of the living Lord, the power of the Cross, was there.

In Denmark we have a saying which goes like this: 'Empty vessels make most noise!'

Are you full of the spirit of the Cross? That means: Have you followed Him? Then He Himself is speaking through you, and you are His mouth-piece.

I even know some dear Christian people who say: 'If I obeyed the Lord I would have to leave my ministry, and therefore I cannot obey!' They think they must be disobedient in order to serve the Lord! And I know many who have this idea: 'If I did what the Lord tells me, I would lose everything'—but may I ask you this question: Has the Lord ever told you to keep anything? Only by our losing everything through obedience can the Lord speak through us. He Himself was obedient right unto death. What could He say on that Cross? He had lost everything. Therefore He could say everything in the power of the Cross, and that was ministry. Here was the true Servant of the Lord; here was the voice of the Shepherd giving Himself without reserve, and therefore being the mouthpiece of the living God. There is no bypass to power, but just the one narrow way leading right unto power—the way of obedience, the way of following our Lord. He not only said: "If any man serve me, let him follow me", but He went on to say: "And where I am, there shall also my servant be" (John xii. 26). We like to put that into the future, but where is the Lord today? Is He in a very popular place? Is He recognised by the so-called Christian people? Where is He? He is outside—and "where I am, there shall also my servant be". Outside! But it is only as you are outside that you are able to speak the word that penetrates everything.

The Lord's ways are not ours. His ways of ministry are not ours. His thoughts are not ours. His ideas about ministry, service, are not ours. The Cross is, and remains, the centre of everything, even the centre of power, the centre of ministry, and so He says: 'No man can serve Me as he is, and no man can speak for Me as he is in himself. No man can serve Me if he follows his own ways and ideas. Will any man serve Me? Then let him take up his cross *daily* and follow Me!' If you do that, the Lord will privilege you with the word of the Cross, and no other word is the word from the Lord. No other word comes out of the mouth of the Lord.

We are so grateful for every occasion when we have listened and have been able to say: 'This is the voice of the Lord!' Let us not spoil that voice or that word. May the Lord give us grace to be obedient even unto death, and may He give us the word of His Cross!

P. M.

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

JUDSON OF BURMA

TO the East of India and next door to China there lies the large country of Burma. Missionary work is no longer possible there, but there are many Christians, and it is now 150 years since the Gospel was first taken to that land. The man most responsible was Adoniram Judson. He suffered untold hardships, but he never gave up, because he himself had had such a wonderful experience of the love of Christ changing his whole life.

Adoniram Judson was a student at Providence College, and he was the son of a Christian minister. I am sorry to say that as he began to grow up he turned away from his father's faith, and by the time he became a student he was sure that the clever thing to do was to say that there is no God and to realize that it is silly to talk about a future life after this one.

So, like many students of today, he began to call himself an atheist, and he joined a set at his college who took delight in scoffing at any kind of faith. One of the leaders of this set was a gifted and popular young man whom we will call Edwards. Judson became a close companion of his, and was so charmed with his wit that he loved to have his approval. They took pleasure together in making fun of any kind of Christianity. Judson's father was greatly saddened by this, but his son would not listen to what he had to say, so that in the end all he could do was to pray that Adoniram might be saved from his bad companions and his mocking of God.

It so happened that during a vacation Judson started out on a tour by horseback, and one night he stopped at a wayside inn to ask if he could put up there for the night. The landlord explained that the only room he had to offer was next to one where a young man lay very ill, perhaps dying. Judson replied that this did not matter at all, since he was not afraid of death. 'When you are freed from all those silly religious ideas,' he added, 'you know that Heaven and Hell do not exist and that dying is just like going off to sleep.'

Off he went to bed, but he found that the partition between the two rooms was very thin and in the stillness of the night he could hear the man who was so ill. In fact, he could not help hearing him, for as he lay awake he heard groans and cries of despair from his unfortunate neighbour. The man was clearly afraid to die, and although he cried to God, it was only in dark despair and

not with any kind of hope. Judson was greatly moved, but he tried to laugh it off; ashamed of what his college companions would say if they knew of his weakness. Above all, he wondered what his gay friend Edwards would say if he knew that his young companion, who had often laughed at death with him, was now soft and weak about it.

The groans grew worse, and Judson wildly wondered whether he ought to pray to God for help for this unhappy sufferer, but then he realized that he would never again be able to look Edwards in the face if he did so. It was a dreadful night, and he shuddered to hear the evident distress of the dying man.

Then all was still, and he lay sleepless and in fear until the morning. When he got up he found the innkeeper and asked about his neighbour. 'He's dead,' was the blunt reply the man gave him. 'Dead!' exclaimed Judson, 'and who was he?' 'Oh,' explained the innkeeper carelessly, 'he was a student from Providence College; a very fine fellow by the name of Edwards.'

Judson was stunned to find that this was the very man whom he had not wished to offend; the one who had been so funny when he was pouring scorn on those who were worried about death and eternity. He remembered the cries and the groans, and realized how easy it is to mock and say foolish things when all seems well, but how hard it is to face up to the real fact of death and judgment.

Instead of going on with his tour he turned the horse's head back towards his old home, and with a heavy heart he told his father of the shock he had had. He begged his godly father to help him to find a faith which could stand the test of death and eternity, and the father had the joy of telling his boy how God so loved the world that He gave His only Son so that those who believe on Him will not be lost but enjoy eternal life. Of course, Adoniram had heard this often before, but he had never been willing to open his mind and heart to the truth and to God's great love. He had thought that it was smart to scoff, but now he knew how foolish he had been.

It took much persuading and praying before he could credit the fact that Christ still loved him, and that in spite of all he could still find life through believing. At last the assurance came and his heart became so filled with the love of the Lord Jesus that nothing would satisfy him but to take the

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

same message of life to those who had never heard it.

Ten years after that night of awakening he was out in Burma, trying to help the Karen people to know the same Saviour. He suffered greatly for his faith. After a period of nearly two years in a dark and dirty prison he was sentenced to death. The exact date and time of his execution were proclaimed, and once more he had to face the grim reality of death. This time, however, it was quite different, for the love of Christ had taken away all fear.

THE TWO KINGDOMS

“... who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love” (Colossians i. 13).

IF we want to know anything about kings and kingdoms, there is one book in the Old Testament which is full of those words, and that is the Book of Daniel. There are a number of chapters in that book which are narrative and tell us what happened, and it is about those chapters, particularly chapters two to six, we shall be speaking. They cover a lot of ground; and if you will read them over again you will find, I believe, that they are all connected.

THE EARTHLY KINGDOM AND THE
HEAVENLY KINGDOM

Chapter ii brings before us in a graphic way that of which the verse in Colossians reminds us: there are only two kingdoms. You remember that Daniel and his friends prayed, and God gave revelation in answer to that prayer. That revelation was that there is an earthly kingdom—the image of various metals—and that there is a heavenly kingdom. I expect Nebuchadnezzar felt rather pleased to find himself in the centre of the vision—“Thou art the head of gold”—but has it ever occurred to you that Daniel and his three friends saw where *they* were in that vision? They were not in the image, for God has delivered us from that dominion—and what a dominion it is! Do not become too interested in the different kingdoms on the earth and what they represent, for you may lose sight of the fact that there is only one kingdom. The nations may come and go, the metals may change, but there is only one kingdom. Daniel and his friends may have prayed that the Lord would remove Nebuchadnezzar, but if He had done so, the

I am glad to say that he escaped, and was able to go on with his witness for Christ in Burma. Many were won for Christ among the Karens. “Think much on the love of Christ”, Judson used to say to all the enquirers and converts. In fact, his favourite text was “the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of Christ” (Ephesians 3. 18). I wonder what your favourite text is!

H. F.

kingdom would go on—and how we have found that, even in our day! One tyranny departs only to make way for another. There is really only one kingdom—the Colossus of man’s making fixed upon the earth, and one day to be destroyed. You notice that when the last expression of the kingdom is destroyed, then, and not till then, the whole image will fall, for it stands as one—and God has delivered us from that!

Then there is another kingdom. Nothing much is said about it; nothing of the appearance, the constitution, the shape, the form and the expression of it, as there is in the case of the earthly kingdom. It cannot be described, for it is heavenly. All that can be said is that it comes out of a mountain and—the most important thing—man never made it: “Made without hands.” The God of heaven has a kingdom in preparation which is hidden from view now. So far as earthly grandeur, size, dimension and appearance are concerned it is nothing to be compared with the earthly kingdom, but one day it is to be revealed as God’s answer—the kingdom of His dear Son. And Daniel and his friends realized that they belonged to that kingdom, and Colossians i. 13 tells us that we are to realize that we do not belong to the one kingdom, but to that other.

Of course, this does not mean that Daniel and his friends had nothing to do with anyone or anything in Babylon, for they did. They had names given them, and you will see that they were called by those Babylonish names, but when Daniel and his friends got together to pray, they did not call one another Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego; they used their real names. There was a fellowship of life that belonged to the other world, the world of their birth and of God’s purpose. But they bore these Babylonish names apparently without protest, and answered to them. They lived and worked in

Babylon and to the outward eye they appeared to have a part in the ordinary life. Take note of that, for the real difference is not outward, but inward.

THE RESULT OF REPUDIATING THE EARTHLY KINGDOM

So, when we come into chapter iii, we find that, though Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego worked and lived in Babylon, when it came to a spiritual issue they were men who had no heart relationship at all with that other kingdom. And what happened to them? That is the development of the story! What does happen if we repudiate and refuse this kingdom of darkness, not in some outward way but in an inward heart attitude? Well, you know that in chapter iii we have the story of the fiery furnace, heated "seven times more than it was wont to be heated". "He *hath* delivered us from the kingdom of darkness"—but as soon as we, in a really living way, take up our place in this world as those who are delivered from the kingdom of darkness, we shall find that kingdom of darkness challenging us. No one is permitted to live in Babylon and in heart be separate from Babylon without knowing the spiritual strength of evil which is behind Babylon. And let me say in passing, and by the way, that of the various nations and cities in the Bible that speak of the power of the god of this world, Babylon is one which speaks of the world from a religious point of view.

However, that is the issue. "Delivered from the kingdom of darkness" sounds beautiful when we sing it in a hymn, and it is nice when we have a vision of what is the glorious end of that other kingdom, but we are in a fools' paradise if we think we are going on singing about it, studying it and talking about it until it comes. No! We are going to be faced immediately with the challenge as to our own heart separation from this thing, and the furnace will be heated seven times. Perhaps that explains some of our experiences for which there is no other explanation. Why is the furnace heated seven times? Because in a new way, by His grace, we have laid hold of the fact that He has delivered us from this dominion of darkness. It does not sound like deliverance, but it is Satan's reaction to our position of faith about our deliverance.

THE ALTERNATIVE

Is there an alternative? Is there not another way? Yes, there is another way, and if we go on into Daniel iv we will find that other way, for this

chapter is about the man who was not delivered—indeed, he was bound up with the earthly kingdom. It is a long chapter, and is the story of the man who did the opposite of what these three men did. They repudiated Babylon. He gloried in it. They were put into the fiery furnace. He was the emperor on the throne—but was he? Not for long! God challenged him. The three men were challenged by the devil, but Nebuchadnezzar was challenged by God. The three men had the fiery furnace heated seven times. Nebuchadnezzar, you will notice if you read this chapter, had God's judgments on him seven times. There is the alternative. But now, while for the moment we feel that the position of the three men in the fiery furnace is a dreadful one and that it is a hard way to repudiate the spirit of this world, when we read Chapter iv we find that there is a harder way, for, while we may come up against the devil if we are true to God, we come up against God if we have any real heart relationship and affiliation with the kingdom of this world. God seems to have loved Nebuchadnezzar. He took pains with him, and in His mercy the king was not destroyed but was brought to his senses; but it is a very bitter, painful, humiliating experience to be brought to our senses by God.

There are only two kingdoms, but those two kingdoms are very real. We have the stark alternatives, the extremes, in chapters iii and iv: the extreme of those who are true to God—for them it is the fiery furnace—and the extreme of the man whose heart has the spirit of Babylon, and he is brought low seven times by the mighty hand of God. Those are extremes, but they are put for us in that extreme form so that we may appreciate the principle, and the principle is this: to belong to the one kingdom is to meet the devil, but to belong to the other is to meet the Lord.

Well, we will come back to the young men in the fiery furnace, and we find that they are all right, after all. Indeed, it was the most wonderful experience of their lives. They were not burned, but were brought through, for they had the blessed, living Son of God with them in their trial.

So we see that the vision of the heavenly kingdom always brings its challenge, but if we will stand firm and say, as they did: 'He has delivered us from this dominion and what happens to us is His concern, not ours', the Lord will take that stand with us.

On the one hand, then, there is a man taking the easy way—but God is against him. On the other hand there are three men being true to their vision and taking the hard way, and though it means a fiery furnace, God is with them.

HOLDING FAST THE HEAVENLY KINGDOM

Now we have chapters v and vi of Daniel. Of course, when the events in chapter vi took place it was very many years after the vision had been received. Daniel was an old man now, but the challenge goes on all through the years. The vision must be adhered to right to the end, and this time the issue is not so much whether Daniel will repudiate Babylon, the kingdom of this earth, but whether he will hold fast to the heavenly kingdom. The expression of that heavenly kingdom, as he knew it, was Jerusalem; and there is always an expression here on earth of the heavenly kingdom. The Lord will always bring our vision down to terms of practical matters—things, places and people. Daniel is not left saying all through his life: 'I live in Babylon but I do not belong there. One day I shall go to the kingdom that I belong to, somewhere in the heavens, somewhere in the skies.' No, he has brought to him the challenge of the earthly expression of that heavenly kingdom, and the question of whether he will be true to his vision, even if the lions' den is the alternative. Daniel had his windows opened to Jerusalem. He took no notice of the great image and had no heart for Babylon. He looked only at the heavenly kingdom, and all his heart was for God. 'Well,' said the devil, 'we will see. The lions' den for you if you take that position!'

HOLDING FAST THE EARTHLY KINGDOM

Let us leave Daniel in the lions' den for a moment and go back to chapter v—the story of Belshazzar and the writing on the wall. He did the opposite thing to Daniel, just as Nebuchadnezzar had done the opposite from the three young men. They repudiated the image; Nebuchadnezzar embraced it. Daniel loved the holy things of God; Belshazzar despised them. I would suppose that the Lord somehow or other—in a manner of speaking—gets used to men's sinfulness, for he did not judge Belshazzar because of the drunkenness, the foulness, the debauchery and the horrible atmosphere of his court. At that time all that did not bring out God's judgment, though it will do one day; but there was one thing that did bring out His judgments, and swiftly. There were holy vessels that belonged to the house of God in Babylon, and in the midst of all the riot and feasting Belshazzar, in his drunken insolence, called for those holy vessels, despising what was of God. We know what happened—the hand that wrote upon the wall the sentence: 'Weighed in the balances and found wanting—thy kingdom taken from thee.'

Once again let me say that though it is hard to be Daniel holding to the heavenly vision and facing the lions' den, it is not easier to take the opposite course and despise the heavenly Jerusalem.

Here again, you say, it is an extreme case. Yes, these are all extreme cases, but we have to apply to ourselves the issue in whatever degree it may come to us. We may not be as proud as Nebuchadnezzar, but if we have the pride of Nebuchadnezzar in our hearts, God will have to meet it and humble it. We may not be as dissolute as Belshazzar, but if, having known something of the heavenly kingdom of the Son of God's love into which He has called us, we regard that as a small thing, if we push that away into a corner of our lives, if we allow the things of earth, the praise of men, the interests of this life, to crowd that out, we are doing in essence what Belshazzar did—defiling the holy things of God. And the writing on the wall says: 'That is how you lose the kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar, thy kingdom is taken from thee. Belshazzar, weighed in the balances and found wanting, thy kingdom is taken from thee.'

DELIVERANCE FROM THE EARTHLY KINGDOM

We come back to Daniel in the lions' den and find that the lions did not eat him after all. The Lord was with him. 'He hath delivered us from the dominion of darkness', and that does not only mean when we are walking on the streets of Babylon. It means, thank God! that when we are in the fiery furnace we are still delivered, because it is not merely a deliverance *from*, but a deliverance *unto*—“translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love”. Thus Daniel and his friends can not only take the kingdom into Babylon, but they can take the kingdom into the fiery furnace and quench it by the presence of the Lord. And they are delivered even in the lions' den, sharing in the heavenly kingdom even there.

THE ISSUE: SHARING IN THE GLORY OF HIS APPEARING

We have, then, five chapters of the Book of Daniel, and each chapter brings a picture with a spiritual principle in it. They are governed by chapter ii—a picture of the two kingdoms—and then tell us of what happened in ordinary, practical life to men, who were just as we are, in relation to those two kingdoms. Two of the men failed to appreciate the true implication of these things. In

two cases, with the other four, the revelation that had come to them transformed their whole lives. They did not only think about it, or talk about it. When it came to practical matters, they lived it and, what is more, when the devil sought to quench them, they proved it. What greater proof of the kingdom of heaven in power is there than that experience of the men in the fiery furnace? That is not what we think of when we read Colossians i. 13! We think of the issue when we are brought out and put on the Throne. That is a nice kingdom! We never think that it will be a fiery furnace heated seven times.

The devil says to you: 'It is all wrong! Everything is wrong! That vision did not mean anything.' God says to you: 'Keep steady! I am with you.' That is the kingdom when it is in Babylon. That is how it works: when you are in the lions' den you are not alone. When I was a boy I used to sing:

"Dare to be a Daniel,
Dare to stand alone."

I have no doubt that Daniel felt alone, but he did not stand alone. God sent an angel, but the Lord will do better than an angel for you—He will be with you Himself.

So let us take courage! The issues of these two kingdoms are fierce, and constant, and will go on right through to the end, but if we will stand firm we shall see, not only our deliverance from the kingdom of this world, but its overthrow; we shall not only see the prospect of the coming of the kingdom, but we shall share in the glory of His appearing.

"He hath delivered us"—let us be sure of it!

"He hath translated us"—let us give God thanks for it!

H. F.

THE MISSION, THE MEANING AND THE MESSAGE OF JESUS CHRIST

7. IN THE LETTERS TO THE CORINTHIANS

WE have, in these messages, been seeing that each part (book) of the New Testament has a particular aspect of Christ to present for the Church in this dispensation. The writer in his apprehension of Christ has this burden and urge, and when we have read all the writings we have a very comprehensive presentation of our Lord. There is, however, another feature which is so very rich and helpful. It is that these separate documents are what they are in value because of their immediate practical context. It is the situations to which they are addressed which bring out the many-sided fullness of the mission, meaning and message of Christ. History, both temporal and spiritual, makes the Christ so necessary, but also so appropriate. This is so very clear when we see the background and occasion of these writings. The Letters to the Corinthians—or the Church in Corinth—are particularly rich in the drawing out of Christ, as I trust we shall see. Oh, for a pen dipped in the fountain of Divine inspiration to show even something of what is embodied of Christ in these Letters! One's heart fails before such an undertaking.

When "Corinth" or "Corinthians" are mentioned, the reaction is immediately that of a frown. The disorders, the wrongs, the sins, and all that is reprehensible at once take the foreground of the

mind. Truly it is a terrible and distressing state of things, and it may be excusable if a major question is asked as to whether that *is* Christianity. There is no passing over of it lightly and this element of contrast and contradiction is not to be excused. The strongest things are said about it by the writer of the Letters. Face it! Take it all for what it is! Hide nothing! Having done so ask your major question: Why did God ever allow all this, and why did He allow it to be put into a document which would go out to ever-widening circles through an ever-increasing length of time? Why did not God cover this shame, this reproach, this contradiction to His own nature and will? When you have done all that, and asked that ultimate question, you have really only given the answer. God has *never* done that, either in the history of His greatest servants, nor in that of His chosen people. Over this strange way of God, a way that we think we would never take, we have to ask a very significant question: Would there be gain or loss from the standpoint of all future time if all this delinquency and wrong had been covered over and not have been allowed to be known to posterity? There are different ways of putting that question, but, have we, and the Church through the centuries, gained from the Letters to the Corinthians, seeing what

it was that necessitated these Letters? There are two main things that have to come out of the answer to that basic question. Firstly, the values that have accrued, which have been *drawn* out by the situation being dealt with. Secondly, why was it that such a situation could exist among Christians?

These two matters are going to take us a long way, and into deep and very profitable waters or mines.

Let us, then, begin by gathering together some of what we may call

THE SPOIL OF BATTLE

That there was a battle, and a very hot one for God's testimony in Corinth, does not need arguing. Putting aside, for the moment, the tragedy and shame of the situation there, what of the values drawn out by it?

We have been accustomed to speaking of the Letters to the Ephesians and Colossians, with Philippians sandwiched between, as the high-water mark of New Testament revelation. In their own realm that may be true. That is, as a revelation of the eternal counsels of God relating to the Church, as such, it is true. But in the realm of Christianity and the meaning of the true Christian calling and life, is there anything comparable in the New Testament with some of the parts of the first Letter to the Corinthians? Take, for instance, that brief section in chapter ii, verses 9-10:

"Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not,
And which entered not into the heart of man,
Whatsoever things God prepared for them that
love him.

But unto us God revealed them through the
Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea
the deep things of God."

What of the statements in chapter vi, verses 2 and 3, statements which most commentators and exegetes pass over because they cannot explain them:

"Know ye not that the saints shall judge the
world?"

"Know ye not that we shall judge angels?"

What a startling way of awakening us to the calling in Christ! What shall we say of chapter xiii? Is there anything in all literature to compare with that? Read it in the various versions, such as Moffat's, the Amplified, etc. This is indeed a superlative standard for attainment. No wonder Paul himself elsewhere—and later—wrote: "Brethren, I count not myself to have attained."

But pass on to chapter xv, this utterly breathtaking presentation of what the Apostle called: "The gospel which we preached". When we read on to the description of the different categories of the resurrection bodies of the saints—sun, moon, stars, glories; the change and transformation from corruption to incorruption, and all the other details—we are left standing, gasping, with one immense question: 'How did Paul come to know all this?' The only possible answer only increases the wonder of the revelation itself. It must be all of a piece with his statement about the Lord's Table in chapter x verse 23: "For I received of the Lord that which I also delivered unto you. . . ." Being in the past tense—"I delivered unto you"—must link this on to the second Letter, chapter xii: "I knew a man in Christ fourteen years ago. . . caught up into Paradise and heard unspeakable things. . . ." Chapter xv of the first Letter must be just the fringe of the "unspeakable things".

Have I established my statement and argument that the sad and deplorable situation at Corinth was sovereignly in grace made the very occasion of drawing out some of the most sublime things in Divine revelation? Thank God for sovereign grace! Now we must get nearer to the particular purpose of these messages, namely, what Christ means in this situation.

To reach this we have to note some major features. The Letters to the Corinthians are full of vivid contrasts. Over against each other there is the contrast between:

- The old creation and the new;
- The natural and the spiritual;
- Darkness and light;
- The earthly and the heavenly;
- The temporal and the eternal;
- The Old Testament and the New; etc.

In between these contrasts stands Jesus Christ with what He means to each. His back is toward the first set with the mighty "NO!" of His Cross. His face is toward the second category with the mighty "YES!" of His resurrection.

In this way Christianity is shown to be severed and rent in two.

CHRISTIANITY SPLIT IN TWO

There is here revealed a *Christianity* to which Christ (in His mission, meaning and message) says positively "NO!" Over that Christianity is written a large "CANNOT".

This is taken up for emphasis and pronouncement early in the first Letter, and runs on through the many matters which are standing for judgment and

correction. Only space forbids us tabulating these points of Divine veto. Let the reader read the Letters and note the points at which Christ says in effect: "Not so!" In that way—in the end—the inclusive and comprehensive verdict is: "You will never get through to God's end in that way!" To help in seeing this we can note where the Corinthians are placed in spiritual history and geography. Pick out the allusions to the Old Testament in these Letters. Two things rise up in bold relief. One, the old creation with its darkness, chaos, disorder, 'voidness', and features of judgment. Two, Israel in the wilderness. We will take this second for our present purpose. Quite clearly, Letter one and chapter x puts the Corinthians (and a certain kind of Christianity) in the position of Israel between Egypt and the Land of Promise, and it does so with a very strong warning. The same position is postulated in Letter two, chapter iii, at verse 7 to verse 16.

What, then, were the features of that position in Israel's history?

1. They were out of Egypt, the realm of judgment by *sovereign* grace, and baptized "in the cloud and sea" *positionally*.
2. They were *in the way* of the "heavenly calling"; and God's purpose.
3. They had the *tokens* of the supernatural life and position, e.g. the Manna, and Water, etc: the "mystery of Christ", "and that Rock was Christ." They knew the sovereign virtue of the blood of the Lamb. Many were the evidences that God was with them and for them. But with all that there hung over them continually the threat and peril of missing the *inheritance*, which—alas—that generation did do. This is *the* warning to this certain kind of Christianity in Corinthians. Why was that? What does "Corinthians" say to that position? Probably the answer is found in two particulars; one, it is possible to be out of the world *positionally* and for the world to still be *in* you. Egypt, even after all its judgment, still continued to pull back and maintain its hold. It was never a very difficult thing

to hark back to Egypt. From the Corinthian Letters it is so easy to see that the world had its pull, its influence, its attraction, over the *soul* of these Christians. The writer was very sure that this could be disastrous regarding the inheritance in the case of those whose *standing* did not lead to their heavenly *state*. In this connection it is that he so strongly discriminates between

THE NATURAL MAN AND THE SPIRITUAL MAN

Literally this is the man of soul, and the man of spirit. His summing up of this difference is that the man of soul cannot and does not go through. He does not come to maturity, but, even after years, he is still a "babe" (iii. 1-2). It is "he that is spiritual" who can, and does, go through! Paul strongly emphasizes the veto that rests upon the one when he says that "the natural [soulical] man cannot".

Christianity has been very slow to even recognize, to say nothing of accepting, this great divide. For want of this discrimination (resulting from a deep ploughing and cleaving work of the Cross) a Christianity exists which is *not going through to what God intends*, and multitudes of Christians are aware of it!

The universities and colleges may make doctors of medicine, philosophy, art, etc., but he quite sure, a man of the Spirit with the knowledge of "the things which have not entered into the heart of man" can no man nor university make! This is the argument and verdict of the New Testament.

The inclusive point, then, is that *Christ is other*. He is the other Man, the Man of the Spirit. His knowledge, wisdom, ability, are of another order. The *real* effect of the indwelling and *mastery* of the Holy Spirit is to *show* and make Christianity a reproduction, a representation of Christ; the mission, meaning, and message of Christ is to produce that essentially other kind that He is. (See II Corinthians iii. 16-18.)

But read the two Letters again!

(To be continued)

SIMULATION—EXAGGERATION—PREDOMINATION

BIBLE interpreters have been convinced that the words ostensibly addressed to "the king of Babylon" in Isaiah xiv have a larger context and can only be exhausted if seen to refer to some erstwhile angelic being. This conviction is strongly supported by

other statements and allusions in different parts of the Bible, such as Jude 6, II Peter ii. 4, Luke x. 18, Philipians ii. 6 (margin—implication to another).

If this is true, then the above makes clear the three steps leading to Satan's downfall. They also

indicate the downfall of much more which has had a good beginning. There is much solemn and valuable teaching here, although the subject is not pleasant.

I. SIMULATION

"I will be like the Most High" (Isaiah xiv. 14)

There is much in the Scriptures which shows that one of Satan's master methods is the imitation of God, and the imitation of God's truth. So much so is this that tremendous emphasis and importance are placed upon spiritual discernment as a gift and as a mark of the anointing. Indeed, it is a characteristic of "he that is spiritual"—the spiritual man. We can say that a primary work and function of the Holy Spirit is discernment. The Holy Spirit is spoken of or represented as having "seven eyes", which means the perfection of spiritual vision. We can here introduce another paragraph of much weight from Dr. Tozer:

"COULD THIS BE OUR MOST CRITICAL NEED?"

"When viewing the religious scene today we are tempted to fix on one or another weakness and say, 'This is what is wrong with the Church. If this were corrected we could recapture the glory of the Early Church and have Pentecostal times back with us again.'

"This tendency to oversimplification is itself a weakness and should be guarded against always. . . . For this reason I am hesitant to point to any one defect in present-day Christianity and make all our troubles stem from it alone. That so-called Bible religion in our times is suffering rapid decline is so evident as to need no proof; but just what has brought about this decline is not so easy to discover. I can only say that I have observed one significant lack among evangelical Christians which might turn out to be the real cause of most of our spiritual troubles; and, of course, if that were true, then the supplying of that lack would be our most critical need.

"The great deficiency to which I refer is the lack of spiritual discernment, especially among our leaders. How there can be so much Bible knowledge and so little insight, so little moral penetration, is one of the enigmas of the religious world today. I think it is altogether accurate to say that there has never been a time in the history of the Church when so many persons were engaged in Bible Study as are so engaged today. If the knowledge of Bible doctrine were any guarantee of godliness, this would

without doubt be known in history as the age of sanctity. Instead, it may well be known as the age of the Church's Babylonish captivity, or the age of worldliness when the professed Bride of Christ allowed herself to be successfully courted by the fallen sons of men in unbelievable numbers. The body of evangelical believers, under evil influences, has during the last twenty-five years gone over to the world in complete and abject surrender, avoiding only a few of the grosser sins such as drunkenness and sexual promiscuity.

"That this disgraceful betrayal has taken place in broad daylight with full consent of our Bible teachers and evangelists is one of the most terrible affairs in the spiritual history of the world. Yet I for one cannot believe that the great surrender was negotiated by men of evil heart who set out to deliberately destroy the faith of our Fathers. Many good and clean-living persons have collaborated with the quislings who betrayed us. Why? The answer can only be, *from lack of spiritual vision*. Something like a mist has settled over the Church as 'the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations' (Isaiah xxv. 7). Such a veil once descended upon Israel. . . . That was Israel's tragic hour. God raised up the Church and temporarily disfranchised His ancient people. He could not trust His work to blind men. Surely we need a baptism of clear seeing if we are to escape the fate of Israel . . . surely one of the greatest needs is for the appearance of Christian leaders with prophetic vision. We desperately need seers who can see through the mist. Unless they come soon it will be too late for this generation. And if they do come we will no doubt crucify a few of them in the name of our worldly orthodoxy. But the Cross is always the harbinger of the resurrection. Mere evangelism is not our present need. Evangelism does no more than extend religion, of whatever kind it may be. It gains acceptance for religion among larger numbers of people without giving much thought to the quality of that religion. The tragedy is that present-day evangelism accepts the degenerate form of Christianity now current as the very religion of the apostles and busies itself with making converts to it with no questions asked. And all the time we are moving farther and farther from the New Testament pattern. We must have a new reformation. There must come a violent break with that irresponsible, amusement-mad paganized pseudo-religion which passes today for the faith of Christ and which is being spread all over the world by unspiritual men employing unscriptural methods to achieve their ends."—DR. A. W. TOZER.

There are various things in the New Testament

which were intended for a witness to Christ; for building up of the Body of Christ; for the glory of Christ, which—for those very reasons—have been taken hold of by Satan and simulated, imitated, and given a resemblance to the true, but have been made—in the end—to discredit Christ, and do just the opposite to their Divine intention. It looks so much like the true that many dear people of God are deceived, perplexed, and led into error. Mixture of error with truth has always been a very successful method of seduction, even from the beginning. God is imitated in idolatry, false worship. Christ is imitated in anti-Christ. The Holy Spirit is imitated in guidance and gifts. Man is deceived by the psychic simulating the spiritual. People, under the stress of pressures of run-down nervous batteries, neuroses, overstrain, spiritual accusations and condemnations, rush to the psychiatrist. The method is to get them to relieve themselves of their tensions by self-expression, divulging hidden things, and in extreme cases by hypnotism. This has a psychological effect and the patient feels 'wonderfully relieved'. Expression; expression! *Self-expression!* One man told the writer that he came away from the psychiatrist feeling that he had been "born again", something even better than his conversion! But—yes, but!—it all came back again, and worse than the former.

Psychology—the science of the psyche—can be Satan's masterpiece in simulating the spiritual, and then plunging the soul into deeper depths of despair.

While there *is* a releasing of *the spirit* in prayer and song, and sometimes release can only be experienced in such ways, and fellowship is a great means of such blessing, there is the counterfeit of noisy and soulful chorus-singing and unbalanced repetition. Music is often the greatest blessing and the greatest peril. "In the Spirit" is the Divine dictum.

2. EXAGGERATION

"I will *ascend above* the heights of the clouds"

This whole paragraph—Isaiah xiv. 9–15—is an exaggeration, if by exaggeration is meant 'to heap up, to load beyond normal, to carry to excess', etc.

"I will ascend above . . ." holds this meaning—"I will exceed". It is ambition run amok. It is pride in full tide. It is something unrestrained by modesty, humility and dependence. It is extravagance. It is just adding to what is right and true. It is overstepping the mark. It is inflation. This is the peril of the passionate soul. *If Satan cannot keep back he will push over.* If he finds earnest devotion he

will urge it to excess. If he finds an active mind he will cause it to add that extra to the truth, so that the truth becomes untrue.

In "the king of Babylon" we have the exaggeration of personality. "See this great Babylon which I have made." The "I", the ego, is assertive, pronounced, overmastering. Leadership and natural ability and gift become autocracy, dictatorship, even tyrannical. There is often a thin line between autocracy and *spiritual* leadership, and it is here that discernment is needed. The former forces, compels and makes legal. The latter comes of suffering, deep history with God, and sets a high standard, and keeps to it. This may be difficult for the flesh in others to accept, and they may wrongly interpret it. Leadership is a Divine gift and of great importance. No one will get far without it. Hence Satan has always marked down this function and its possessors for special attention to exaggerate it and defeat its true object. Dependence is the refuge of the spiritual leader, and the Lord very fully sees to this!

There are many exaggerated movements in our time. Teaching is pushed just that much beyond its true meaning. Something right and good, and then the bit in excess. It is thought to be very *spiritual*, advanced teaching, but the line of actual meaning has been crossed, and confusion follows because of an unbalanced emphasis. This has so often been the cause of exotic and eccentric sects and groups, and their number is legion. The Athenian propensity was "some new thing", which usually means some new *sensation*. How powerfully Satan supports such exaggerations and makes error grow without proportion! He knows full well that he is going in this way to fill the world with disillusioned people who presently will not believe *anything*, particularly the truth. It was this very thing which made the Apostle John so strongly, almost vehemently, pinpoint the truth in his constantly repeated: "*This is . . .*". See his letters, and note his emphasis upon "the anointing teaching all things". The context is anti-Christ in deception.

3. PREDOMINATION

"I will *exalt* my throne *above* . . ."

"Exalt." "Above." The object, the goal, the climax of Satan's aspiration. It sounds fantastic and remote. But it is not so remote and unthinkable as it seems at first sight. Is not this the motif and stimulus of all power politics? If only we realized it, the undercutting of this was *the* reason for the Incarnation, because *all* sin has sprung from this

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

root. The birth, the childhood, the manhood, the teaching, and the Cross of Jesus Christ were a positive offset to worldly power and glory. Never did He seek to 'make an impression', draw to Himself or to His cause by prestige, elaborateness, glamour, or a show of natural glory.

Even of His rightful heavenly glory and status "He emptied Himself". His Kingdom and His Kingship were not of this world.

All this was to undo something which had been distorted. This something is in us all. We worship the idol of success. We have a totally false conception of strength, power, and importance. Jesus came to correct this in His own person. "Thou madest him to [in order to] have dominion." Yes, but not self-centred: "Bringing many sons to glory." Yes, but the glory of His infinite grace, favour

without any merit! "We shall reign with him." Yes, but as worshippers of the Lamb!

The test of everything is whether it really exalts Christ. Not in word only. That may be a form of simulation and exaggeration. The demon-possessed temple girl of Ephesus may sponsor and preach the Gospel, but it is a "deep thing of Satan", and the Apostle was not selling the Gospel cheaply to the devil to gain popularity. The holiness of Christ is the criterion!

So we—all so briefly—note the way of Satan's course, but the way of his fall. The judgment upon his simulation, exaggeration, and predominance is "Thou shalt be brought down to hell". Over against the false may the Lord produce the true similitude of Christ: the true magnifying of Christ: the true exaltation and supremacy of Christ!

REVELATION IS NOT ENOUGH

The following message by the late Dr. A. W. Tozer, to be included in a further volume of addresses by him now in preparation, is, we feel, so much in keeping with the ministry of A Witness and A Testimony, that we borrow it for our readers, assured that they will be very glad to read it. It was recently in The Alliance Witness of the Christian and Missionary Alliance. And while mentioning this, may I say that, in early years of ministry and the Lord's work, I owed very much to the life of Dr. A. B. Simpson, founder of that 'Alliance'.

Editor.

"About the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John vii. 14-17).

THE key, the crux of this whole issue, is in verse 17. If any man is willing to do God's will, he shall know.

People marvelled at our Lord as He taught. They asked: "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" 'How does He know learning', in other words, 'never having studied in the regular schools?' In those days they had no schools as we know them; a rabbi taught little groups of students. Our Lord evidently never attended a rabbinical school, so they asked: 'How does He get His

wonderful doctrine, since He has never been to the schools of the rabbis?"

Now, this question tells us a good deal about these people. It tells us that they held truth to be intellectual merely, capable of being reduced to a code. To know truth it was necessary only to learn the code.

Most of them had no books of their own—they learned by memorizing. That was their conception of truth. I gather this not only from verse 17 but from the whole Gospel of John. To these people truth was an intellectual thing—just as we know that two times two is four.

That is truth, but it is an intellectual truth only. They reduced divine truth to that status. They knew the laws: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. . . . Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. . . . Thou shalt not . . ." But to them there was no mysterious depth in truth, nothing beneath and nothing beyond the obvious fact. It was exactly here that they parted company with our Saviour, for our Lord Jesus constantly taught the beyond and the beneath.

These people believed that the words of truth were the truth. And here is a basic misunderstanding of Christian theology with a moral and spiritual consequence that is vastly important. They believed that if you had the words of truth, if you could repeat the code of truth, you had the truth. That if you lived by the word of truth you lived in the truth.

The Saviour tried to correct this inadequate view. He showed them the heavenly quality of His message. He said: 'My doctrine is not Mine—I am

not a rabbi teaching doctrine that you can memorize and repeat. What I am giving you is not that kind of doctrine at all.'

He had said previously: 'I say nothing for Myself—what I see the Father do, that I do, and what the Father speaks, that I speak. What I have seen yonder I tell you about. I am a transparent medium through which the truth is being spoken. You believe that the way to truth is to go to a rabbi and learn it. That's not the truth; that approach to truth is inadequate.'

Here, it seems to me, is the weakness in modern Christianity. The battle line, the warfare today, is not necessarily between the fundamentalist and the liberal. There is a difference between them, of course. The fundamentalist says: God made the heaven and the earth. The liberal says: 'Well, that's a poetic way of stating it; actually it came up by evolution.' The fundamentalist says Jesus Christ was the very Son of God. The liberal says: 'Well, He certainly was a wonderful man and He is the Master, but I don't quite know about His deity.' So there is a division, but I don't think the warfare is on these matters any more.

The battle has shifted to another more important field. The warfare, the dividing line today, is between evangelical rationalists and evangelical mystics. I will explain what I mean.

There is today an evangelical rationalism which is the same as these Jews had. They said the truth is in the word, and if you want to know truth, go to the rabbi and learn the word. If you get the word, you have got the truth. That is evangelical rationalism and we have that today in fundamental circles. 'If you learn the text you've got the truth.'

This evangelical rationalism will kill the truth just as quickly as liberalism will, though in a more subtle way. The liberal stands over there and says: 'I don't believe your inspired Bible; I don't believe your deified Christ. I believe the Bible in a way; it is the record of the high points of great men and I believe in a certain mystic communion with the universe and it is all very wonderful, but I don't believe as you do.'

You can easily spot this man—train your glasses on him and there he stands. You can tell he is on the other side, for he wears the uniform of the other side.

But your evangelical rationalist wears our uniform. He comes in wearing our uniform and says what the Pharisees, the worst enemies Jesus had while He was on earth, said: 'Well, truth is truth, and if you believe the truth you've got it.'

Such see no beyond and no mystic depth, no mysterious heights, nothing supernatural or divine.

They see only: 'I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth: and in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord.' They have the text and the code and the creed, and to them that is the truth. So they pass it on to others. The result is we are dying spiritually.

Now, what about the evangelical mystic? I don't really like the word 'mystic' because you think of a fellow with long hair and a little goatee who acts dreamy and strange. Maybe it is not a good word at all, but I am talking about the spiritual side of things—that the truth is more than the text. There is something that you've got to get through to. The truth is more than the code. There is a heart beating in the middle of the code and you've got to get there.

Now the question is simply this: Is the body of Christian truth enough? Or does truth have a soul as well as a body? The evangelical rationalist says that all of that talk about the soul of truth is poetic nonsense. The body of truth is all you need; if you believe the body of truth you are on your way to heaven and you can't backslide and everything will be allright and you will get a crown in the last day.

Now otherwise stated: Is revelation enough or must there be illumination? Is this Bible an inspired book? Is it a revealed book? Of course you and I believe that it is a revelation, that God spoke all these words and holy men spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

I believe that this Bible is a living book, that God has given it to us and that we dare not add to it or take away from it. It is revelation. But revelation is not enough. There must be illumination before revelation can get to your soul. It isn't enough that I hold an inspired book in my hands. I must have an inspired heart. There is the difference.

You can memorize all the texts of the Bible—and I believe in memorizing—but when you are through you've got nothing but the body. There is the soul of truth as well as the body. There is a divine inward illumination the Holy Ghost must give us or we don't know what truth means.

Conversion is a miraculous act of God by the Holy Ghost; it must be wrought in the spirit. The body of truth is not enough; there must be an inward illumination.

Christ's conflict was with the theological rationalist. It revealed itself in the Sermon on the Mount and the whole Book of John. Just as Colossians argues against Manichaeism and Galatians argues against Jewish legalism, so the Book of John is a long, inspired, passionately outpoured book trying to save us from evangelical rationalism, the doctrine

hat says the text is enough. Textualism is as deadly as liberalism.

Now revelation, I repeat, can't save. Revelation is the ground upon which we stand. Revelation tells us what to believe. It is the Book of God and I stand for it with all my heart; but there must be, before I can be saved, illumination, penitence, renewal, inward deliverance.

I have no doubt that many people are eased into the kingdom. They are jockeyed into believing in the text, and they do; but they have never been illuminated by the Holy Ghost. They have never been renewed in their hearts. They never get into the kingdom at all.

Now, there is a secret, in divine truth altogether hidden from the unprepared soul. This is where we stand in the terrible day in which we live. Christianity is not something you just reach up and grab. There must be a preparation of the mind, a preparation of the life and a preparation of the inner man before we can savingly believe in Jesus Christ.

Somebody asks: Is it possible to hear the truth and not understand the truth? Listen to Isaiah: "Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not" (vi. 9). It is possible to see yet not perceive.

Paul says (I Corinthians ii. 4-5): "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

Now the theological rationalists say that your faith should stand not in the wisdom of man but in the Word of God. Paul didn't say that at all. He said your faith should stand in the *power of God*. That's quite a different thing.

Verses 9 through 14 say: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. . . . But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

Paul, the man of God, is saying: I came preaching and I preached with power that would illuminate and get to the conscience and to the spirit and change the inner man in order that your faith might stand in the power of God.

My brethren, your faith can stand in the text

and you can be as dead as the proverbial doornail, but when the power of God moves in on the text and sets the sacrifice on fire, then you have Christianity. We call that revival, but it's not revival at all. It is simply New Testament Christianity. It's what it ought to have been in the first place, but was not.

Now look at Matthew 11: "Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."

So there we have the doctrine taught plainly that there is not only a body of truth which we must hold at our peril; there is also a soul in that body which we must get through to, and if we don't get through to the soul of truth we have only a dead body on our hands.

A church can go on holding the creed and the truth for years and generations and grow old and die, and new people come up and receive that same code and they grow old and die.

Then some revivalist comes in and gets everybody stirred and prayer moves God down on the scene and revival comes to that church. People who thought they were saved get saved. People who have only believed in a code now believe in Christ.

A man will go along in a church and believe texts and quote them and memorize them and teach them and maybe become a deacon and all the rest. Then one day, under the fiery preaching of some visitor or maybe the pastor, he suddenly feels himself terribly in need of God and he forgets all his past history and goes to his knees and like David begins to pour out his soul in confession. Then he leaps to his feet and testifies: 'I've been a deacon in this church twenty-six years and never was born again until tonight.'

What happened? That man had been trusting the dead body of truth until some inspired preacher let him know that truth has a soul. Or maybe God taught him in secret that truth had a soul as well as a body and he dared to get through and pursue by penitence and obedience until God honoured his faith and flashed the light on. And like lightning out of heaven it touched his spirit and all the texts he had memorized became alive.

Thank God, he did memorize the texts, and all the truth he knew suddenly now bloomed in the light. That is why I believe we ought to memorize.

That is why we ought to get to know the Word, why we ought to fill our minds with the songs and the great hymns of the church. They won't mean anything to us until the Holy Ghost comes. But when He comes He will have fuel to use. Fire without fuel won't burn but fuel without fire is dead. And the Holy Ghost will not come on a church where there is no Biblical fuel. There must be Bible teaching. We must have the body of truth.

Jesus said if any man is willing to do God's will, he shall *know*—he shall know the doctrine, he shall know the teaching. Now, this body of truth can be grasped by the average, normal intellect. You can grasp truth, but only the enlightened soul will ever know the truth and only the prepared heart will ever be enlightened.

And just what is the preparation needed? Jesus said: 'If any man *is willing to do My will* the light will flash in on him. If any man will obey Me, God will enlighten his soul immediately.'

We make Jesus Christ a convenience. We make Him a lifeboat to get us to shore, a guide to find us when we are lost. We reduce Him simply to Big Friend to help us when we are in trouble.

That is not Christianity. Jesus Christ is Lord. But when a man is willing to do His will, he is repenting and the truth flashes in.

No man can know the Son except the Father tell him. No man can know the Father except the Son reveal Him. I can know about God; that's the body of truth. But I can't know God, the soul of truth, unless I am ready to be obedient.

Before the Word of God can mean anything inside of me there must be obedience to the Word. Truth will not give itself to a rebel. Truth will not impart life to a man who will not obey the light! "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." If you are disobeying Jesus Christ you can't expect to be enlightened.

But there is illumination. I know what Charles Wesley meant when he wrote: "His spirit answers to the blood, And tells me I am born of God!" Nobody had to come and tell me what he meant. 'He that is willing to do My will,' said Jesus, 'shall have a revelation to his own heart. He shall have an inward illumination that tells him he is a child of God.'

If a sinner goes to the altar and a worker with a

marked New Testament argues him into the kingdom, the devil will meet him two blocks down the street and argue him out of it again. But if he has an inward illumination and he has that witness within because the Spirit answers to the blood, you can't argue with that man. He will say: 'But I *know*.' A man like that is not bigoted or arrogant; he is just sure.

Now that's revival, but yet it is not revival either; it is normal Christianity. It's the way we should be. "If any man will do his will, he shall know."

But you say you're going to take a Bible course. If you are holding out on God, refusing to follow Jesus, you can take a course and learn all about synthesis and analysis and all the rest. But you might just as well read Pogo; all the courses in the world won't illuminate you inside. You can fill your head full of knowledge, but the day that you decide you are going to obey God it will get down into your heart. You shall know. Only the servants of truth can ever know truth. Only those who obey can ever have the inward change.

You can stand on the outside and can know all about it. I once read a book about the inner spiritual life by a man who was not a Christian at all. He had an amazing penetration. He was a sharp intellectual, a keen Englishman. He stood outside and examined spiritual people from the outside but nothing ever reached him.

You can read your Bible—read any version you want—and if you are honest you will admit that it is either obedience or inward blindness. You can repeat the Book of Romans word for word and still be blind inwardly. You can quote the whole Book of Psalms and still be blind inwardly. You can know the doctrine of justification by faith and take your stand with Luther and the Reformation, and be blind inwardly. For it is not the body of truth that enlightens; it is the Spirit of truth that enlightens.

If you are willing to obey the Lord Jesus He will illuminate your spirit, inwardly enlighten you, and the truth you have known will now be known spiritually and power will begin to flow up and out and you will find yourself changed, marvellously changed. In that great day of Christ's coming all that will matter is whether or not I have been inwardly illuminated. Inwardly regenerated. Inwardly purified.

Do I *know* Jesus?

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EDITORIAL

REALIZING CHRIST'S PRESENCE

I SUPPOSE it is true that most of the Lord's servants would acknowledge their indebtedness to some men of God whose influence had been a help to them. I gladly make this confession in quite a number of instances. In the earlier days of my ministry, when there was a true heart-hunger for God's fullest and best for my life, I was greatly inspired and helped by the life and ministry of such greatly-used servants of God as Dr. A. J. Gordon (of Boston), Dr. A. T. Pierson (of Philadelphia originally), Dr. A. B. Simpson (Founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance), Dr. F. B. Meyer, Dr. Campbell Morgan, and others. In my earliest days of ministry a little book came into my hand with some messages by Dr. A. J. Gordon. I have forgotten its title and have quite lost trace of it. But it opened my eyes to a new level of spiritual life, and was like the door into a spiritual world of which I knew very little. When in Boston in 1925 (my first visit to that country) I made a point of visiting the church (Clarendon) where Dr. Gordon fulfilled his main life-work. I was deeply disappointed at finding nothing that spoke of my dear spiritual benefactor, but I pursued him in his books, which I found in Philadelphia. Among these

books, and connected with his volume on the Lord's Coming Again, I found his 'dream'—'How Christ Came to Church'. I am giving the substance of that 'dream' here, with its larger context and purpose. Here it is:

"Not that I attach any importance to dreams or ever have done so. Of the hundreds which have come in the night season I cannot remember one which has proved to have had any prophetic significance either for good or ill. As a rule, moreover, dreams are incongruous rather than serious, a jumble of impossible conditions in which persons and things utterly remote and unconnected are brought together in a single scene. But the one which I now describe was unlike any other within my remembrance in that it was so orderly in its movement, so consistent in its parts, and so fitly framed together as a whole. I recognize it only as a dream; and yet I confess that the impression of it was so vivid that in spite of myself memory brings it back to me again and again, as though it were an actual occurrence in my personal history.

"And yet why should it be told or deliberately

committed to print? 'I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord', says the apostle. His was undeniably a real, divinely given, and supernatural vision. But from the ecstasy of it, wherein he was caught up into paradise and heard unspeakable words, he immediately lets himself down to the common level of discipleship. 'Yet of myself I will not glory but in my infirmities.' God help us to keep to this good confession evermore; and if perchance any unusual lesson is taught even 'in visions of the night when deep sleep falleth on men' let us not set ourselves up as the Lord's favourites to whom He has granted especial court privileges in the kingdom of heaven. No, the dream is not repeated as though it were credentials of peculiar saintship, or as though by it God had favoured me with a supernatural revelation; but because it contains a simple and obvious lesson, out of which the entire book which we are now writing has been evolved.

"It was Saturday night, when wearied from the work of preparing Sunday's sermon, that I fell asleep and the dream came. I was in the pulpit before a full congregation, just ready to begin my sermon, when a stranger entered and passed slowly up the left aisle of the church looking first to the one side and then to the other as though silently asking with his eyes that some one would give him a seat. He had proceeded nearly half-way up the aisle when a gentleman stepped out and offered him a place in his pew, which was quietly accepted. Excepting the face and features of the stranger, everything in the scene is distinctly remembered—the number of the pew, the Christian man who offered its hospitality, the exact seat which was occupied. Only the countenance of the visitor could never be recalled. That his face wore a peculiarly serious look, as of one who had known some great sorrow, is clearly impressed on my mind. His bearing, too, was exceedingly humble, his dress poor and plain, and from the beginning to the end of the service he gave the most respectful attention to the preacher. Immediately as I began my sermon my attention became riveted on this hearer. If I would avert my eyes from him for a moment they would instinctively return to him, so that he held my attention rather than I held his till the discourse was ended.

"To myself I said constantly: 'Who can that stranger be?' and then I mentally resolved to find out by going to him and making his acquaintance as soon as the service should be over. But after the benediction had been given the departing congregation filed into the aisles and before I

could reach him the visitor had left the house. The gentleman with whom he had sat remained behind, however; and approaching him with great eagerness I asked: 'Can you tell me who that stranger was who sat in your pew this morning?' In the most matter-of-course way he replied: 'Why, do you not know that man? It was Jesus of Nazareth.' With a sense of the keenest disappointment I said: 'My dear sir, why did you let Him go without introducing me to Him? I was so desirous to speak with Him.' And with the same nonchalant air the gentleman replied: 'Oh, do not be troubled. He has been here today, and no doubt He will come again.'

"And now came an indescribable rush of emotion. As when a strong current is suddenly checked, the stream rolls back upon itself and is choked in its own foam, so the intense curiosity which had been going out toward the mysterious hearer now returned upon the preacher: and the Lord Himself 'whose I am and whom I serve' had been listening to me today. What was I saying? Was I preaching on some popular theme in order to catch the ear of the public? Well, thank God, it was of Himself I was speaking. However imperfectly done, it was Christ and Him crucified whom I was holding up this morning. But in what spirit did I preach? Was it 'Christ crucified preached in a crucified style'? Or did the preacher magnify himself while exalting Christ? So anxious and painful did these questionings become that I was about to ask the brother with whom He had sat if the Lord had said anything to him concerning the sermon, but a sense of propriety and self-respect at once checked the suggestion. Then immediately other questions began with equal vehemence to crowd into the mind. 'What did He think of our sanctuary, its gothic arches, its stained windows, its costly and powerful organ? How was He impressed with the music and the order of the worship?' It did not seem at the moment as though I could ever again care or have the smallest curiosity as to what men might say of preaching, worship, or church, if I could only know that He had not been displeased, that He would not withhold His feet from coming again because He had been grieved at what He might have seen or heard.

"We speak of 'a momentous occasion'. This, though in sleep, was recognized as such by the dreamer—a lifetime, almost an eternity of interest crowded into a single solemn moment. One present for an hour who could tell me all I have so longed to know; who could point out

to me the imperfections of my service; who could reveal to me my real self, to whom, perhaps I am most a stranger; who could correct the errors in our worship to which long usage and accepted tradition may have rendered us insensible. While I had been preaching for a half-hour He had been here and listening who could have told me all this and infinitely more—and my eyes had been holden that I knew Him not; and now He had gone. 'Yet a little while I am with you and then I go unto him that sent me.'

"One thought, however, lingered in my mind with something of comfort and more of awe. 'He has been here today, and no doubt He will come again'; and mentally repeating these words as one regretfully meditating on a vanished vision, 'I awoke, and it was a dream'. No, it was not a dream. It was a vision of the deepest reality, a miniature of an actual ministry, verifying the statement often repeated that sometimes we are most awake toward God when we are asleep toward the world."

That is the 'dream' and its effect on Dr. Gordon as inspiring him to write on "He will come again". But what of the larger context? Firstly, its effect upon myself. The effect has been to make me always—in leading any service—keep as high and reverent a level as possible. To maintain a dignity, respect, and 'good taste' worthy of such an honourable presence as that of our Lord. The result is that anything 'cheap', undignified, 'loose', in leadership is very abhorrent to me, although I trust that I am not haughty and superior. This leads to my real purpose in writing in this way.

In another place in this little paper we have had to dwell upon the very low behaviour of some Christians in the Church at Corinth. It is a picture

of behaviour—especially in the Assembly—which is so very unworthy of Christ and would seem to imply an almost total loss of the sense of His presence. Do you not feel, dear friends, that there is a lot of room for a recovered sense of reverence and dignity in our gatherings? Should this be artificial, induced by dim light, soft music, stained-glass windows, and solemn procession? Our Lord—the glorious Son of God, Creator of all things, exalted above all dignities in the universe, destined to be the sovereign Ruler of the universe—has said: "Wheresoever two or three are gathered in my name, there I am." "There I am!" Oh, how much there is that results from not realizing His presence! The noisy chatter before and immediately after 'worship'(?). I dare not list the things which would not be if there was a due respect for His presence. Dr. Gordon may have spoken of Him as "Jesus of Nazareth", and referred to His lowly appearance, but when he *realized* who had been present he was almost devastated with shame and self-confusion. 'Jesus of Nazareth here, watching, listening, feeling?'

What respect have we for Him? Are we such victims of our natural senses, our eyesight, that because we do not see Him in the flesh, we are without spiritual sensibility? When we ask Him to be present do we really realize who it is that we invite? What would we do if we knew that some very high dignitary in this world was coming amongst us?

I am sure that we should derive much more blessing from His presence if we were more "in the Spirit" of that presence. But, not only on one day in the week, and when we 'go to church', but we ask for His presence always. This is my word of appeal.

T. AUSTIN-SPARKS.

THE BATTLE FOR LIFE

Editor's Note.

The book with this title has been out of print for some time, but we are frequently being asked for it. There are some difficulties in reprinting at present. We have several waiting to go to the printers, but the Lord will have to facilitate in the matter. We do feel that this book, The Battle for Life, has a

vital message for our time, and we have therefore decided to reproduce it in A Witness and a Testimony. This will, of course, take some considerable time, so we shall keep in mind the reprinting of the whole book as soon as it is possible. Notice of this will be given well ahead. There are some slight alterations and additions in its form as here.

CHAPTER I

THE QUEST OF THE EYES OF FLAME

Reading: Revelation i. 1-20; ii. 1.

BY way of a brief introductory word let us focus your attention upon what we feel to be the Lord's concern with His people at this time.

In the second and third chapters of the Book of the Revelation we have the Lord's survey of the seven churches. As those eyes that are as a flame of fire peer into the inner spiritual state and lay bare the condition—analyse, dissect, separate, place on the two sides of debit and credit, and form and pass their final verdict—we see one thing to be at issue with regard to them all. There may be particular differences in them; the aspects may vary; the elements may be very different: yet when all has been surveyed and gathered together it is to establish but one fact, namely, the presence or absence of that which, from the Lord's standpoint, constitutes justification in the continuance of the Lord's full committal to anything which claims to represent Him. The issue for every one of these churches was whether, under the Lord's permission, they could remain as true witnesses, and whether they could continue as really representing Him. The Lord had them before Him—shall we say, had them in His hand—and was determining whether He could keep them or whether He would have to put them away; whether He would have to "remove the lampstand out of its place" (Revelation ii. 5), or whether it could abide with His full approval. So that the question was clearly one of continuing in relation to the Lord's intended purpose or of losing its position. We have seen bodies cross the sky at night, coming from afar, gaining in brilliance, it seemed, as they came nearer, flashing on their way, and then disappearing altogether from view in the darkness of the night. Here are "stars" brought in by the eternal counsels of God, flashing in with the glory of His grace, some of them to cease to fulfil those counsels.

The question concerning every instrumentality raised up by God in relation to His purpose is: How far can He go on with it? It is evident that there are things which do not justify Him in wholly supporting some instrumentalities which He originally raised up and used. These letters make those things clear.

In the first place, the fact that God originally raised up an instrumentality, that it came from Him and was His work initially, does not justify

Him in keeping it indefinitely. That is made quite clear. We should take serious account of the fact that, because God raised up a thing, it does not mean that He must of necessity keep that thing right through unconditionally, that is, no matter what its state or character may be eventually or in the course of time. Further, the fact that an instrument has had a wonderful history of devotion to Him, and has at some time been a very real and full expression of His grace and power, does not resolve itself into a claim upon Him, and He does not regard Himself as under any obligation to preserve it indefinitely. But we have to press the point still further. Because at any given time many commendable things are to be seen in an instrumentality, which the Lord Himself may praise—and there may be not a few such things—nevertheless, this record shows that even they do not justify God in preserving it in its former place; even the presence of such comparatively good things does not mean that He may never consider putting them out of their original place, or that He is bound to refrain from doing so. There are many things which continue to exist and serve a purpose, but have lost their place in their original value to the Lord.

That is a very thorough sifting of everything. It might be thought that if God raised up a thing, if it came in the first place from His own hand; if God had used it and blessed it; if it had shown the features and characteristics of His grace and His love; if that instrumentality still had in it many commendable things which God, looking with His eyes as a flame, could approve of, surely that is enough to argue for its continuance in the fullness of His blessing? You understand that we are speaking about instrumentalities. We are not speaking about souls. We are not dealing with the question of salvation, but with that of vocation.

What, then, justifies the Lord in preserving and going on with any such instrumentality? We must look to see what motivated Him when He brought it into being, what was in His mind and in His heart. We shall find all we need to know from the very description of the instrumentality itself. In the passage to which we have referred it is called a lampstand—"seven golden lampstands" (R.V.M.). Our knowledge of the Word gives us much light upon what that means, and the Old Testament in particular comes at once to our help; for whether it be the candlestick in the Tabernacle, or the candle-

stick all of gold shown to Zechariah (Zechariah iv: 2), we know that in both cases there was represented the living expression of the Holy Spirit's energies. Take the candlestick all of gold. We remember the pattern of it, with its seven bowls and seven golden pipes; and the oil being emptied out from the living olive trees through the pipes into the bowls, to provide the resource for the light. It is a very complete, very comprehensive illustration, and it is something that is living. At one end there is a living fountain or spring. The prophet does not say that there were cisterns, tanks, some man-made receptacle of oil, but living trees, and oil being poured continually, ever fresh—warm from the arteries of that living organism, as it were—into the candlestick, burning with its steady, undying light, a light which does not vary, which does not go out, which is maintained at full strength continually.

THE UNDYING FLAME

It is the testimony of an unfailing, undying, all-sufficient life; the testimony of a life which is not abstract, not something stored up, but something which is coming all the time from an inexhaustible stream, a mighty, glorious life. As the light burns, it is a constant declaration of victory, and that, a victory over death, which would seek to smother the flame. It burns in the midst of surrounding death, a continuous declaration that death has no power to quench it.

To come back to the Book of Revelation: What is it, and what is it that alone justifies God in maintaining any instrumentality in *full* relation to Himself and His purpose? It is not that the instrumentality has many good things. It is not that it had its origin with God. It is not that it has a great history, a great past, a good tradition. It is not that it has a name, a reputation, the name of its more glorious days. It is that there is *today* the same undying flame of Divine life in it, a testimony against the power of death all around. That is God's justification.

You notice that in relation to the seven golden lampstands there is reference to the seven Spirits of God, meaning spiritual fullness, and to Jesus Christ the Faithful Witness. He is identified with these lamps. He is in the midst of them, closely associated with them. They were called into being in order that they might be an abiding testimony to the Lord Himself as the Faithful Witness, the Living One, in the power of the Spirit of God.

When we come to analyse the state of these churches, we find that in five of them, at least,

there is a variety of elements, each of which is an expression of something that is a contradiction to the Holy Spirit, a contradiction to the Spirit of life. When such a thing is found amongst the Lord's people—*within* the vessel, the instrument—it constitutes an element of death and provides Satan with his foothold, and all unconsciously for the most part among those people the testimony is contradicted.

The point is this. Satan will resort to anything—his methods and his means are numerous—to get some foothold for death in a Divinely-constituted instrumentality, so that the thing becomes a contradiction right at its very centre. It has a name; it has good works; it has many things which even the Lord Himself cannot judge because they are good; but the vital thing by which alone the Lord can be justified in maintaining that instrumentality in its former position has been countered. It is not a question of what there once was of good and whether it still flourishes today, but rather: Has the Lord that central, basic, essential, indispensable thing for which He has ever raised up His instrumentalities, whether individuals or companies, and brought them into relationship with Himself, that for which He apprehended them, that which was intended to be their specific vocation? It is not a matter of its bulk, size, or earthly quantity, but its intrinsic quality.

Let us look again at the particular case in point (Rev. ii. 1 et seq.). The Lord is saying: "From whence thou hast fallen." "The first works." "Think again, reconsider, and change back" ("Repent"). "I will remove thy lampstand out of its place." To whom does He so address Himself? To Ephesus. Ephesus! Only thirty years before had Ephesus received that deposit of revelation above which there is nothing to excel in the New Testament; that wonderful disclosure of the eternal counsels and calling of God which came to bear the name 'Ephesians'. Oh, the tragedy of Ephesus! Time was when it could be said that, through her, "all Asia" was affected. Her intrinsic value registered over that wide area.

What did the Lord mean by removing her lampstand *out of its place*? Not necessarily that by one stroke what was there would be wiped out or blotted out. Not a geographical removal or a literal extinction. Ephesus and its church went on for many years. But its essentially *spiritual* position in the "*vocation* wherewith it was called" was lost. It became something else. It may have grown numerically. It might have been accepted in Ephesus. Its "good works" may have remained and been many. But its spiritual measure, intrinsic virtue,

and resources for the Church beyond its locality were lost. "Its *place*" spiritually could be removed without its temporal and material location being touched. Is this not the sad history of so many things which had a beginning and went on in spiritual power and spontaneous effectiveness for some years, but eventually lost their *spiritual* place and position in the "whole counsel of God"? In many cases, both of individual and personal and of collective ministries, we have to say: 'They have lost out;' 'they do not correspond to their beginning.' Many places which once were centres of far-reaching influence, while still existing, only do so on an earlier tradition. Many ministries under which we felt the Divine impact have—with the extra tragic factor of insensibility to the fact—lost that Divine unction. Is it expansion without commensurate spiritual resource? Is it popularity and acceptance which has robbed of the sense of crisis and urgency? Has the vision faded because of success or adversity? Have elements of contradiction found a loophole somewhere and worked like secret leaven to corrupt? Whatever it might be, there it is, and such a thing is on record in the Word of God as a warning for all time that this is the peril which besets anything which God raised up as a lamp of true testimony. Some of us inwardly weep as, in our own lifetime, we have seen this tragedy in servants of God, in movements and instrumentalities which have lost out. Spiritual pride is a major and certain cause of such disaster. When the 'Institution', 'Mission', 'Centre', or any *thing* becomes the object of talk and gratification, and it is not the Lord in growing fullness, then the days of the Lord's full committal to it are numbered.

We have all been apprehended of Jesus Christ, and there has been a purpose behind that apprehending. We have not been apprehended just to be saved. Our salvation is but basic and introductory to something very much more. The Lord gathers His own together to form them into a corporate vessel of Divine purpose. He raises up such instrumentalities from time to time; but whether it be individuals or whether it be companies, one constant danger is that the 'essential thing' in the Divine thought in raising it up, in apprehending that vessel, should somehow be lost while many other things may continue.

THE LORD'S STANDARD OF JUDGMENT

One inclusive thing arises from this survey of the churches. It is that the Lord deals with every life

or vessel in the light of His specific purpose for it, and not of its general usefulness. These chapters would never have been written if the Lord were simply taking this view: 'Well, this vessel is not wholly bad; there is much yet of value here; it has not altogether gone away from Me; therefore I must look after it and support it, preserve it, and commit Myself wholly to it;' but the Lord is not doing that. We may be thankful to the Lord for anything that there is in this world which is good and is of Himself, and as we ourselves go into it we are grateful that the Lord should have any witness in a world like this; but, oh, so far as His own people are concerned, so far as the Church is concerned, that never satisfies Him. Of that we may be quite sure.

Why are we saying this? Because so many people say: 'Well, you know, you are trying to get something so perfect! Why not be satisfied with what is commendable about the Church today? Take it as it is! Accept it and be thankful that there are so many who belong to the Lord and bear His name in a world like this!' I find that this record does not allow of that. God knows that we are grateful that there are believers in this world, be they but poor ones. You cannot go abroad in a world like this and see its state, its Godlessness, its sinfulness, without being thankful to find even a very poor specimen of a believer who has some love in his heart for the Lord. You are thankful for the smallest thing that speaks of Him. Oh, but when you come to see God's purpose, when you see that what He has designed for His Church is the occasion of His call, His choosing in Christ, you can never be satisfied with nominalism, or with general goodness.

When you come to a word like this you find it taking you right on—if you like to call it 'extreme' you may—right on to the end. It tells you quite plainly that whether there be a great past, a great history of Divine blessing and usefulness, a great reputation for good works, and many good things still obtaining, none of these things is an adequate justification for the Lord to commit Himself wholly to that vessel, for He has some reservations. He must have questions unless the purpose for which that vessel was raised up is being fulfilled. None of the New Testament Letters would have been written if the Lord was satisfied with the merely nominal. There has never been anything perfect, but the serious matter is that of our attitude to: "not having yet attained". Paul said: "I am not yet perfect, but . . .", and very much hung upon that "but". These churches in Revelation had accepted their imperfect condition.

THE NOMINAL IS ULTIMATELY REJECTED

For what was the Church raised up? I do not believe that the Lord originally thought of having a general Church, and then a special one within it; a general mass of believers, and then a company called 'overcomers' in the midst. That has never been the design of God. It is what we might call an emergency state of things, and is essential because of general failure. It seems to me that the very word 'overcomers' presupposes that there is failure somewhere. The Lord's purpose for *all* His Church, as a vessel—which nevertheless may only be realized in a few—is that it should maintain the testimony of a life which has conquered death, and will conquer death right to the end. It is a life question.

The Lord Jesus is constituted the great Witness upon the ground of the power of God which was exercised in Him when He was raised from the dead. Remember that the testimony of Jesus is always related to His being raised from the dead; that is, that He lives by a power which has conquered death. He is the Life on that ground, on that basis, in that sense, and those whom the New Testament approves as witnesses to Jesus are not those who talk the truth about Him, but are *witnesses of His resurrection*—that is, of course, in a spiritual way—witnesses to Christ as risen. The New Testament's testimony of Jesus is that God raised Him from the dead and that He is alive for evermore. That is the essence of the testimony. Thus the whole question resolves itself into one of testimony in life, a testimony of life. It is not a testimony of doctrine, in the first place, but a testimony of life. Is the flame burning as at the beginning, witnessing that Jesus

lives and is triumphant, even over the dark, deadly background of this world? That is the question for the Lord's people; the question for your life and for mine, and for every collective instrumentality.

As we proceed we shall see a great deal of what that means. For the moment we simply focus our thoughts upon the issue. I have no doubt in my heart as to what the issue of our time is. I trust that in this matter we may rightly claim to be of the tribe of Issachar, so to speak, to know what the time is saying and what Israel ought to do. I have not the slightest shadow of a doubt but that the issue of our day, of this hour in the Church's history is, more than ever, the issue of life and death in a spiritual sense. Are you not more and more experiencing that awful sapping of your very vitality, that draining of your life, that exhausting of your energy, perhaps especially in relation to prayer? Is it not true that it often requires a supreme effort to pray, and to get through when you have started to pray? You need energizing from a source other than that of your own natural energies in this matter, and that increasingly so. There is a strange, deep, terrible sapping of vitality, mental and physical vitality as well as spiritual. Spiritual people, at least, know something of that. And lying at the back of it is the *final conflict of this age*. It is the spiritual issue of life and death.

The Lord would say to us something about that at this time, and we have to direct our eyes in the the way of the Lord's thought to the great issue which is at stake for His people. I trust that we shall know that He is not only making us aware of it and not only warning us about the perils of it, but that He comes mightily to our aid and shows us what is on our side in the battle.

(To be continued)

THE POWER OF THE CROSS

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the plan of salvation which from the beginning has been hid in God who created all things by Jesus Christ; to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, corresponding to the eternal purpose which he fulfilled in Christ Jesus our Lord: in whom we have boldness and access in confidence by faith

in him. Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which are your glory" (Ephesians iii. 8-13).

LAST time we said that the word of the Cross is the power of God, provided it is spoken with the voice of the Lord, that is, in the spirit of the Cross.

If anyone contested that this statement was untrue and accused me in Court of lying, then I would call Paul as a witness and easily win my case!

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

A TREMENDOUS CHANGE

The Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ made a tremendous change in Paul himself. He had been full of pride, especially spiritual pride. Then he saw a man die and he heard the word of the Cross spoken in the spirit of the Cross, for Stephen said: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts vii. 60). Paul's conscience was pricked, and from then onward he came under the power of the Cross; and the result was, as I have said, tremendous. He calls himself "less than the least of all saints", and this was not pious hypocrisy. Sometimes we just play at being humble, but Paul did not. When he said: "I am less than the least of all saints", it was no exaggeration, for he meant it. The power of the Cross deals a death-blow to our pride.

In his pride Paul had considered the heathens as dogs. Now he had received grace to preach among them "the unsearchable riches of Christ". Many of us have a hidden contempt for certain people, but if we have been exposed to the power of the Cross we will be ready to serve anyone anywhere. You remember the story of the woman who came to Jesus and asked Him to heal her daughter, and He answered: "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs", but she said: "Yea, Lord: even the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs" (Mark vii. 27, 28). The best heathens would have been grateful for crumbs, but Paul gave them the unsearchable riches of Christ! When you have been exposed to the power of the Cross of the Lord you give to those whom you formerly despised much more than they themselves expect. Have you experienced in your own life this tremendous change from old to new?

A TREMENDOUS WORK

Paul experienced this tremendous change, but he also had a tremendous work to do: preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ. This, and not just preaching the so-called 'simple Gospel' is evangelization. You will never find the 'simple Gospel' in the New Testament, and if you make the Gospel more simple than it is there, you water it down to nothing. I believe that there is not one word of the Lord Jesus which we have *fully* understood, and if we try to make the Gospel understandable for the natural man, then we misinterpret it. The Gospel is profound, and what we consider the most simple statement can never be understood by the natural man.

Paul did not try to make the Gospel understandable. He proclaimed the unsearchable riches of Christ; and because he did not try to do the

Holy Spirit's work, the Holy Spirit could make the power of the Cross felt among the heathen when Paul preached. Many were saved, and then Paul began his essential work.

I think it was Oswald Chambers who said that it is hard work to bring a man to salvation, but it is one hundred times harder to make him a disciple. Paul was not only an evangelist, but also a teacher, and if you have been exposed to the power of the Cross you feel a real responsibility for the Lord's people. Therefore Paul, as the Danish translation says: "Enlightened them about the plan of salvation which from the beginning of the world had been hid in God as a secret." And that is hard work! It is a tremendous job and can only be done by a man who has experienced the tremendous power of the word of the Cross.

A TREMENDOUS PURPOSE

So after the tremendous change and the tremendous job, we have also a tremendous purpose, which was that the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to principalities and powers through the Church. Sometimes, when I have read these verses, I have thought: 'Paul, you were a fool! It is much more important that the manifold wisdom of God should be made known through the Church to *men*! If you had aimed at that, Paul, you could have rejoiced in having something to point to, something to show men as the result of your work. Principalities and powers are in the *unseen* world, but you should have shown *men* a wonderful Church, full of the wisdom of the Lord, a Church that would make people wonder and fall down in adoration!' Out of a hundred workers for the Lord, ninety-nine would do as I have just suggested. When people come to me and ask: 'How many are you in Copenhagen?' I would be happy if I could say: 'Twenty thousand; and we have elders, deacons, a modern office, a publishing company, twenty-five thousand subscribers and the most modern church building that you have ever seen. We have experienced the Lord in a wonderful way, and we have done a wonderful work for the Lord. Come along and see! This is the power of the Cross! Paul is a bit old-fashioned. He thinks only of unseen powers, but we are men of reality. We have something to point to. Oh, and I forgot to tell you that we have two hundred missionaries on the mission-field, and the offerings for the mission-field this year have topped all others years.' Would all that not be the work of the Cross? Could anyone come and say that this was not the work of the Cross? Well, perhaps ninety-nine out of a hundred would agree with me, and only some odd people

here and there would not be quite satisfied. They would ask me some questions in which perhaps I would not be very interested!

I shall not enlarge on this, because I have seen too many great things to be impressed. I am not quite convinced that principalities and powers are impressed with church buildings, with numbers, with deacons or with elders. Perhaps they have more to do with reality than men of today. They can penetrate through all these things into the hearts of men, and they can see how much there is of the wisdom and power of the Lord in us. And the more this dawns upon you, the less you can seek to create or organize the church by human means. The more you realize this, the more you lean on the Cross of the Lord, and on the power of that Cross. A man who has been exposed to the power of the Cross himself can never lay his hand upon the church and organize it along his own lines. He has a tremendous job, and that is, to suffer for the Church, and, by spiritual means, to help the Lord's children to see.

This, as far as I understand it, is in our days the great difficulty in and among the Lord's servants. There are some who are being exposed to the Cross in such a way that they work along Paul's lines, but they are the exceptions. Most say that it does not lead to any real result, and they believe in themselves more than in the power of His Cross.

Now I am in Court and Paul is my witness. He has brought much good evidence: a profound change in myself, a profound change in my conception of other men, a profound conception of the work to be done, a profound conception of the meaning of the Church, a profound conception of the calling of the Church, and all as a result of the

power of the Cross. Then, as final evidence, Paul says: 'Only such a profound change in him and in his conceptions of men, in his intentions, in his understanding of the Church, corresponds to the profound work of our Lord Jesus on His Cross. There He cried: "It is finished!" The Lord is not in need of human strength, wisdom and effort, for what He has done is sufficient.' If you now say to Paul: 'All this is too big for me!' he would answer: 'I have not said this to paralyse you. No, God fulfilled His purpose in Christ Jesus our Lord: in Him we have *boldness* and *access in confidence* by faith in Him.'

Our calling is great, but we are not paralysed. We have boldness and confidence through faith in our Lord Jesus. We enter into the holiest of holies through faith in Him, and in that place there is no room for human energy or fleshly wisdom at all. With confidence we look into the face of our Lord and say: 'We are Thine, O Lord. We have faith in Thee, O Lord. We have no faith in ourselves, Lord. We do not believe in our own wholeheartedness. We do not believe in our own dedication. Our faith is in Thee, and in Thee alone. And now we identify ourselves with Thee, and whatever the price may be, we shall not go back to our own ways and our own ideas. Use us as Thou dost want. We will take up our cross daily, follow Thee and obey Thee, whatever the cost may be.' Then the Lord has a free hand and He builds His Church, not to display it before carnal men that they should admire it, but in truth and reality, so that even principalities and powers may recognize that this is of God.

It can be done, and it shall be done!

P. M.

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

THE INNER SECRET

ERNEST was puzzled. He was also sad. He had been to a Memorial Service for his grandfather and there he had heard read a chapter from the New Testament which spoke about believers being "caught up" to be with the Lord at the Second Coming.

It had not been a sad service, for everyone seemed so certain that they could look forward to seeing Grandfather again when they were all caught up. Ernest was sad, however, because he was not at

all sure that he would be among them, and he was puzzled for he could not understand how God would know for certain whom to call up to join that happy reunion and whom to leave behind.

He continued to wonder about this for some days, and then a big change happened which occupied all his thoughts. He and his parents went to live with his grandmother, who was now left all alone in her big house and wanted them to share the home with her. First of all there was the

excitement of the move and then, of course, there were many new and interesting things in Grandmother's house—"gadgets" his father called them. In this respect perhaps it was the bathroom which was the most interesting.

Take the soap, for instance! Instead of lying rather wet on the washhand basin, it just hung on a sort of arm or bracket which was fixed on the wall tiles just above. Perhaps it was not true to say that it hung, for, as a matter of fact, you just put the soap up against and underneath the arm and there it stuck. Ernest did not normally like washing very much, but now he was always ready to wash his hands just for the joy of seeing if the soap stayed put. And it always did!

At least, it always had done until that morning when his grandmother was ill. She was not very ill, but still she had to stay in bed, so that meant that Mother took water, soap and towels into her bedroom for her. So when Ernest came to the bathroom there was no soap. That is to say that there was none in the right place, but there was another tablet on the ledge by the bath, so he used that.

The trouble came when he placed it on the special bracket. It fell with a clatter into the handbasin. That is funny, thought Ernest. It has never done that before. He tried again, pressing the soap against the metal arm, but still it did not stick, but fell once more down into the basin. This was one more problem for Ernest! It was the same kind of soap and the same colour, and yet it would not stay up but fell whenever he let it go.

As a matter of fact, this was a very similar problem to the one he had thought so much about, as he found when he told his father about it. By this time Grandmother was settled and the soap back in the bathroom, so his father told him to fetch both tablets. This he did, and still they looked the same.

"Turn them over," Father said, and when Ernest did this he found that the first tablet had a small metal disc on it, while the other had none. "That is what makes the difference, Ernest," his father explained, "and that is what makes it possible for the soap not to fall. Not that the disc has any power! Oh, no, that is just an ordinary bit of steel. The power is in the magnet which is at the end of

that bracket. The magnet has the power, but it needs the metal disc to use it."

Ernest was beginning to understand. He knew enough about magnets to realize that they have the power to attract and to hold iron, and although he had never thought about it before, he saw that soap without iron was no use for this purpose. He asked his father if the soap had to be specially made with this steel cap, but his father showed him how it could be removed and fitted into the other cake of soap. Having pressed the disc into the other piece of soap he gave it to Ernest, saying: "Now go up to the bathroom and try that." The boy hurried upstairs, and to his delight he found that the second tablet of soap was now firmly held by the bracket. It did not fall as before.

Father had known about Ernest's problems concerning being "caught up", so he took the opportunity to explain by means of the two pieces of soap how one could be taken and the other left. "Outwardly," he told Ernest, "one cannot always be sure who is a true Christian and who is not, but inwardly there is no difficulty. The true Christians have Christ in their heart, whereas the others, however nice they may be as persons, are just like that second piece of soap. They have nothing in them which can respond to the upward tug of the magnet of God's love. They will be left behind, for they have never asked the Lord Jesus to come into their lives."

This left Ernest very thoughtful, but then he had an idea. "Father," he said, "it was not too late to change that second piece of soap, was it?" "No," answered his father, "it was not too late, and nor is it too late for you to change. It will make all the difference if you open your heart for the Saviour to come in and live in you."

Now Ernest has no problems about being ready for the Coming of the Lord. With the Lord Jesus in his heart he knows that the great magnet of God's love will not let him fall. Of course, there was a big difference between what happened to the soap and what happened to him. With the soap it was only an outward extra, but with a human life it is an inward change which decides our future. The right explanation is in Colossians i. 27: "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

H. F.

“WHEN THE COMFORTER IS COME”

“If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive; for it beholdeth him not, neither knoweth him: ye know him; for he abideth with you, and shall be in you” (John xiv. 15–17).

“But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you” (John xiv. 26–27).

“But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me, and ye also shall bear witness” (John xv. 26, 27).

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send him unto you” (John xvi. 7).

THERE are many variations of this word “Comforter”, such as ‘Advocate’, ‘Helper’, ‘Counsellor’. They all seem inadequate, but probably the best is this old one, “Comforter”, provided we do not think of that in terms of mere pacifying or soothing influence, but realize the true meaning of the English word, which is to bring strength. The Lord Jesus was speaking to His disciples of a day that was to be “when the Comforter is come”, and assuring them that He was not coming as a mere power to help them, nor as an influence to bless them, nor as a substitute merely for Christ in an outward way, but the purpose of His coming was that Christ was, by this means, to minister and to communicate in an inward way His own very life to them. He was coming, but not as they had known Him before. They had only known Him as the world had known Him, though perhaps in a more intimate way and on more intimate terms, but they knew Him by the same means—by their senses, their eyes, their ears, and so on. But now the Lord Jesus was saying: ‘I am coming to you in a way that the world does not know and cannot know, for it is an inward way. That is a Divine expediency.’ “It is expedient for you . . .” In other words, this is one of the great ‘musts’ of the Bible.

We are familiar with some of them. “Ye must be born again” (John iii. 7). “Neither is there any other name under heaven . . . wherein we must be saved” (Acts iv. 12). “Through many tribula-

tions we must enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts xiv. 22). And this is equally emphatic. We must know the inward power of Christ’s life by the Holy Spirit.

“When the Comforter is come. . .” This was a challenge to the disciples. If you read chapters xiv, xv and xvi of John, which are so very familiar to us, you will find that the disciples, when the Lord spoke to them, were all in a muddle; they were perplexed; they could not understand. The Lord was talking about something which was quite beyond their experience and they did not know what He meant. That, of course, was particularly owing to the day in which they lived, for they were pre-Pentecost and could not know. Nevertheless, the challenge comes to us that, for many practical purposes, we may be in the same condition, so I want to say a little about the coming of the Comforter as an essentially inward work in the very innermost heart of our being, for the Lord says that ‘must be’. If we are to reach any worthwhile spiritual goal we must be born again, and equally we must know that the Comforter has come. The outward experiences of Christ are not sufficient, for to a large extent they are devoid of power. So the whole challenge to us is—as it was to the disciples—whether our experiences are largely of that superficial character, or whether they are inward.

THE TEACHING OF THE SPIRIT

We take first the matter of teaching—“He shall teach you all things”. Sometimes we are rather proud of the teaching which we have had, for it has been good teaching, Bible teaching, spiritual teaching, deep teaching. Well, the disciples had it all, for they had the best. They had over three years of the best teaching that any man ever had, for it came from the lips of the Lord Himself. Sometimes for us the value of the word is lost because we take too much note of the one who speaks it, and we reject the Lord’s word because of the messenger. We are quite wrong to do that, because the truth is still the truth, whoever speaks it. While those who speak it need to be very much before the Lord that they should not be contradictions of what they say, we must remember that the truth is still the truth. We cannot avoid it, and we cannot excuse ourselves by the faults of the one who speaks it. But that cannot be said about the Lord! Every Divine utterance that came from those lips was not only the truth, but it was

altogether confirmed and expressed in the life of the One who spoke it. What a teacher! And what teaching! And yet, at the end of it all, were they any better for it? It is very difficult to say. Was there any real expression of what they had learned in their lives? It is hard to find. The very best teaching over years, received in all sincerity, is powerless until it becomes an *inward* experience.

Now the Lord Jesus says: "There is a new day coming when all that you have heard from Me shall become vital truth inside you." "He shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you." Do you think the disciples had forgotten what the Lord said? I do not, for they were men of at least average intelligence, and it is quite clear from the Gospels that the Lord repeated again and again the most important of His utterances. So I am sure they had not forgotten what the Lord said. Why, then, does He say: "The Spirit will bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you"? Well, it works like this. We might know what the Bible teaches about love from beginning to end and could give an exposition on it with all its different points, but in the midst of our daily life be suddenly brought into a situation where our own impetuosity or lack of love is going to find expression. It is then that the Spirit warns us and "brings to our remembrance"—not for intellectual purposes, but for practical purposes, and, unless He does that, what is the use of all that teaching? Do you think the world would have been any better for these disciples if there had not been a Pentecost? I do not, and yet, in the letter, they knew as much the day before Pentecost as they knew the day after. Oh, the difference between the outward impact of teaching, and the vital reminder and application of that teaching in the inward man!

"When the Comforter is come . . ." We must not base our doctrine on the Comforter coming on the day of Pentecost, or on any doctrine that is mere doctrine. The challenge as to whether the Comforter is come is found in whether the teaching is in us, whether it is working and whether it is finding expression, for the Lord says that when He comes that will be His work—"He shall guide you into all the truth" (John xvi. 13).

THE INDWELLING OF CHRIST BY THE SPIRIT

But more than the teaching, we must think of the power of influence. What a wonderful power there is in the influential atmosphere of a good and godly person! How much we affect people, not by what the Lord knows we are inside, but by

what they get from us, or what they see in us! I think all of us would be checked up daily, almost hourly, if we realized that, while the first thing is our own life with the Lord, we must always be remembering how we are influencing and impressing others. There is a great power for good about the loving, holy, true life of one with whom we have close contact. Well, the disciples had plenty of that! Day and night for a very long time they had the best influence that any men have ever had, and they enjoyed it and were helped by it, but in the end it did not make a lasting change in their character. When the influence was taken away they had lost the secret of their living. The Lord was going, and they wondered how they could then continue in the life which they had been living. So, while it is true that the influence that we bear on others is of great importance, it is equally true that, in the last issue, mere influence is not enough, for it is external, superficial, and depends upon the realized, conscious presence of the other person. We are challenged in that very matter, for there are many things we would never say nor do in the presence of other people whom we respect, and yet we say and do them when we are absent from those people—as though the Lord were not with us. We would not like to hurt or grieve loved ones, or those whom we honour. The Apostle says: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit" (Ephesians iv. 30).

When the disciples came to know the transformation, the change, from that which had been outward, wonderful though it was, to that which was inward, they came into the experience of which the Lord spoke when He said: "In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you" (John xiv. 20). To know, not in mere doctrine, but in vital spiritual consciousness, is better than the influence of a godly life! "Ye shall know that . . . I (am) in you." No wonder that the Lord said: "It is expedient for you that I go away", for they might have had twenty or thirty years with Him instead of three and imagined that, because their lives were made more sweet and valuable and acceptable in an outward way because of His influence, they were Christians, and they would not have been. Christians are not made from the outside. "In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you"—that is how Christians are made.

THE SERVICE OF THE SPIRIT

Then there is the matter of service. None of the sermons of the disciples before Pentecost are

recorded. I am rather sorry, for it would be interesting to know what they preached and how they preached it. We do not know, but I question whether, in actual phraseology and words they would have been found faulty. I imagine that, to a large extent, they repeated the lessons which Jesus had taught them, and preached the messages which they had heard from His lips, but what we do know for certain is that when the Lord was with them only in an outward way, their service was largely powerless. It had little energy or ability to effect any really vital purpose. Yes, they served the Lord for three years. Do not think that they started their service for the Lord on the day of Pentecost! They served Him during those three years, but everything was in an outward way. They were repeating what they had heard someone else say; they were conveying the lessons that they had learned in an outward way, but they were doing their best to serve the Lord. We must never imagine that the disciples were anything less than whole-hearted, devoted lovers of the Lord through all His earthly ministry, but there was not much to show for the service at the end of the three years because, as we have been saying, all this knowledge of Christ, which was superficial, lacked power.

Now the Lord Jesus said: "When the Comforter is come . . . he shall bear witness of me, and ye also shall bear witness." That is not even saying: 'You will be witnesses and the Holy Spirit will back up what you say', though that might be true, but He puts it the other way round. 'The Spirit is working, the Spirit is busy, the Spirit has taken up the matter of the service of God, and you will find that you are sharing it with Him. You will be brought into it by Him, and the effect of it will be this: "When (the Comforter) is come, (he) will convict the world of sin" (John xvi. 7, 8)' "When the Comforter is come"—but not to the world. The spirit of God has always been in the world. We must not pray for the Spirit of God to fall like an influence on people, convicting them of sin, (though sometimes He may do that), for that is not what the Lord said. He said: 'I am sending the Spirit to *you*, who have lacked conviction when you have spoken, whose words have been so powerless, and whose service has been so ineffective. I am sending the Spirit to *you*, and when He comes the world will be convicted of sin and of righteousness and of judgment.' And it works like that! It searches all our hearts when we realize how often our lives lack the tang of that conviction, and how our words fail to do what Peter's did at Pentecost—pierce men to their heart.

THE INWARD PEACE AND JOY OF THE SPIRIT

How transient, how unsatisfactory, were all the disciples' experiences of blessedness! But when the Lord Jesus spoke of the day when the Holy Spirit should come, He coupled with that promise the promise of His peace. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth" (John xiv. 27). They had known peace in company with the Lord Jesus, but in its essence it had been the kind of peace that the world gives. You remember, for instance, the terrible storm they were in, and how the Lord Jesus, by His presence in the boat, calmed the storm and brought a great peace to them. They did not need to be disciples to experience that peace! In fact, there were other ships round about that got the blessing of it. They had known the peace of realizing, when they were hungry, that it was not their concern, but the Lord's, for He would provide them with food. There were many ways in which, in outward experiences, they knew peace by the fact that the Lord Jesus was among them.

It was the same with joy. He turned the water into wine. He gave them happy, joyful experiences, but the joy did not last. When the Lord spoke these words to them they were gloomy and depressed, and He had to upbraid them, chide them, but at the same time He brought them a word of promise. He said: 'This is the sorrow of travail, but it will give place to the joy of realization, and that joy is a joy that the world cannot give you, and a joy that the world cannot take away from you. Even though I go "your joy no one taketh from you".'

Oh, the blessedness of Christ when known, not by the outward tokens of His favour but by the inward witness of the Holy Ghost! Has the Comforter come to you like that? That is the challenge all the time!

THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT

There is the matter of unity, too. Even the Lord Jesus was incapable of establishing real unity when He was found just in the midst of His disciples! That sounds a terrible thing to say, for it seems as though He was ineffective—but He is ineffective as long as He is only outside of us. That is why He said: 'I must go away, because here, while I am in the midst of you, and you are all gathered around Me, you are not really united, and you cannot be united. It was foretold as long ago as Zechariah's time that when the Shepherd was smitten, the flock would be scattered (Zechariah

xiii. 7.) So long as you all keep your eyes on Me you have at least a method of living, and you get on together—though not very well. But take Me away and you are disintegrated—and God means you to be disintegrated.’ This is a Divine exposure of the inadequacy of any other unity than the unity of the Spirit. Unity, after all, is a matter of confidence—I think the whole crux of unity is found in that word ‘confidence’. One disciple would say: ‘Well, of course, I have confidence in the Lord, but I have not got confidence in this man.’ James might say: ‘I have confidence in John, but I have doubts about Peter.’ So it was impossible for them to be united. They would each say: ‘Yes, I have confidence in the Lord, but I have no confidence in my brother.’ That is a very common state of affairs! What is the Lord’s answer to it? As far as I can see, the answer was given in these words when the Lord Jesus said: “When the Comforter is come”. Chapter xvii, which expresses His great prayer for unity, is not the prayer that is to remind us to try and get on with one another, but the prayer to the Father that this great thing might be realized and that unity might be achieved by Christ dwelling in His people. John has no confidence in what he sees of Peter, but after Pentecost he finds that there is something of the Lord in Peter, and He has confidence in the Lord. As long as this band of men have the common factor of Christ within, they must be patient, they must have love, and they must devote all their prayers and efforts to the strengthening of that bond, and trust the Lord to deal with the much that is not of that character.

That is in us all. We see it perhaps more glaringly in one than in another, and it may be present in larger measure in some than in others, but if we

look at that disuniting, disintegrating factor of what we are, unity is impossible. Christ is robbed, the devil is pleased, the world is stumbled, and we find ourselves more and more isolated. Think what would have happened if there had been no Pentecost! Each one of those disciples would have lost confidence more and more in the others, and they would have become more and more separated each from the other until in the end the ones who were so conscious of faults in others would find themselves isolated and separated. That is how it works out. It is spiritual death to us to live on the ground of what we are, or what anyone is in the flesh.

The secret of unity is to know that the Comforter has come. It is a challenge to us all that others should not find so much of that other element in us, but that what Christ is should have the greater part, should be the predominant, governing influence in our lives. The more that is so, the more unity is possible, and the more power there will be about the unity. But it is not a question of greater or lesser unity. It is a question of no unity because things are outward, or of unity because Christ is within.

“When the Comforter is come. . .” It is a challenge to us all as to whether the Comforter has come, as to how much opportunity He has, as to whether we perchance have quenched Him, or are quenching Him—or, to use that far more intimate term, whether we have grieved Him, or are grieving Him, for He is a Person. Is Christ within? Let us praise the blessed Name of the Lord who was ready to go away in order that He might come, and who has come to our hearts to fill them with Himself!

H. F.

THE MISSION, THE MEANING AND THE MESSAGE OF JESUS CHRIST

8. IN THE LETTERS TO THE CORINTHIANS (continued)

WE have seen that, in the Letters to the Corinthians, the Christians are spiritually in the position corresponding to that of Israel in the wilderness. That means that we have to see how Christ is applied to that situation. Every part of the New Testament, i.e. every book, brings Christ into view in some particular way or aspect in relation to some particular situation because *the whole* of the New Testament is comprehended by the mission, the meaning, and the message of Jesus Christ. We

have seen that the position of believers in Corinth corresponding to Israel in the wilderness means that they were *positionally* out of the kingdom of darkness; baptized into Christ; in the good of the passover lamb—flesh and blood; on the ground of justification by faith. *Positionally* they were in the Kingdom of heaven and on supernatural ground. All this was true by reason of sovereign grace. But now, all that was objective and what was positional had to be made inward and their condi-

tion; that is, it had to be made their own spiritual state. Many were the inconsistencies and contradictions between position and condition, and God could not accept that. Hence the serious warning drawn from the tragedy of Israel—the disaster in the wilderness in failure to “go on” to the *purpose* of salvation. In our last message we put our finger upon one real cause of the disaster, and this will have to be kept in view as we proceed into these Letters. In the Corinthian letters we shall find Christians at the point where Israel were at Sinai, and two things will stand out among others, or one thing in two aspects. Those two things are

SPIRITUAL SEEING and SPIRITUAL HEARING

A moment's reflection will at once bring to mind how very much those two things were the very substance of the mission, meaning and message of Jesus Christ, and, moreover, the governing principles of the whole New Testament.

With Israel in the wilderness these two things related respectively to the Tent of Testimony and the ordering of progress. They are both in the later chapters of the Book of Exodus through the Book of Numbers. The Tent of the Testimony, or the Tabernacle, was central and in view for all to see. The tribes were so arranged as to face the Tabernacle on all sides and from all directions. From the door of the Tabernacle the silver trumpets sounded, to be heard by all the people in connection with all order and movement.

The principles were seeing and hearing; *the seeing eye*, and *the hearing ear*. Put together they represent the Lord Jesus as central and supreme, and the Holy Spirit as God's voice concerning Him. Sit back with those facts and think of the Corinthian letters in their light. So, we come to

THE PLACE OF CHRIST: THE PLACE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

in relation to spiritual order and progress in a Corinthian situation.

The place of Christ

We must step back and join the Apostle when he was contemplating his letter to Corinth, after he had received the information about the situation there.

The Apostle had known about Corinth before his first visit five years earlier. Morally it was the worst city in the world, and such was the situation there that this courageous servant of God said that

he was with them then “in much fear and trembling.” However, out of the 400,000 population, a company had turned to the Lord and they represented the “Church of God in Corinth”. But during the five years of the Apostle's absence there had been this grievous spiritual decline which we find described in this letter. Indeed, it was a decline for in the later part of the letter (chapter 15) the Apostle reminds them of “the Gospel which was [then] preached to them, and which they believed”. What a Gospel! Knowing what he was going into at Corinth he had made a very definite and firm resolve: it was “to know nothing among you but Jesus Christ, and him crucified”. He says here that he laid the Foundation, which was Christ. In five years they had built upon that foundation almost everything *but* Christ. Hence, he returns to the Foundation and is brokenheartedly (“with many tears”) starting all over again. They had sent him a letter in which they asked for his mind on eleven matters, and the very fact of their not knowing what was right or wrong on such elementary matters shows how they had lost sight of Christ and the mind of the Spirit. The letter is largely an answer to the questions, but what we are taking particular note of is his approach to the whole tragic situation. We have said that he returned to his original premise—“Jesus Christ, and him crucified”. In no Letter is the name of Christ so continuously introduced. It occurs no less than nine times in the first nine verses. Throughout the entire Letter, in every particular and problem, it is as though the Apostle was challenging as to how that, and that, and that corresponded to the Foundation, to Christ. That certainly, whatever he said, was his standpoint. Was it the divisions and partisanships? The challenge is: “Is Christ divided?” Those unhappy and deplorable conditions, he says, are due to immaturity, a baby measure, and the immaturity is not growing up into Christ. The spiritual eye was blinded to Christ by being occupied with other objects. Even Paul, Apollos, and Peter—he says—were between them and Christ. *Paul positively refused to allow his own or any other man's name to justify a party or sect!* The names mentioned probably represented a personality complex; or an aspect of truth complex; or a particular, temperamental, traditional, or positional complex; but, whatever it was, its effect or tendency was to obscure Christ, and Paul would have none of it. The irony of the situation was that there was a party which would not join the other sects because they were superior and claimed: “We are of Christ.” That *sounds* good, does it not? But Paul is not having that, either, because it

embodied the party *spirit* as much as any other. Paul is against the *spirit* of things!

We may observe that many things which started out well and good have in time become more marked by their spirit than by Christ. You meet the superior mentality that 'we are the people' and 'they are not of us'. This is as big an abomination as any pronounced sectarianism. It is not that we say that we are of Christ, but how much of Christ and the Spirit of Christ is evident in us? The plummet, or plumb-line, by which the straightness or crookedness is determined is Christ.

So Paul brings Christ alongside of all the eleven questions presented to him in the letter from Corinth. The question of marriage, of non-marriage; of sex; of mixed marriages; of dress—head-covering of women and men; of behaviour in the assembly and at the Lord's Table; of meats offered to idols; of 'tongues' and 'prophesying', etc. While saying some things as from the Lord, and others as his own Christian judgment, in effect he is raising one question over all and making it the final criterion: 'How does this accord with Christ?'

Would that we always, in all things, so challenged the practical matters of our life in a world like this! Not what the world does or thinks; not what is current in the world, or even with some Christians, but is this well-pleasing and honouring to Christ? Not even: 'Is there any wrong in it?' But—positively—is it governed by love of Christ?

So, as with Israel in the wilderness, Christ has the central place and is *always in view*.

But that is only one half of the matter. The other half is

THE SILVER TRUMPETS—THE VOICE OF THE SPIRIT (Numbers x. 2, 8, 9, 10)

Trumpets have an interesting place in the Bible, from the first in Numbers x to the "last trump" of I Corinthians xv. 52.

In the wilderness their function was to sound "an alarm", to call to battle, to call to a feast (the Feast of Trumpets), to order the camp for journeying, etc. When all is said about them, a trumpet presupposes an ear to hear. It has no meaning or sense if there is no hearing. Hence, it is unprofitable for the Lord to speak unless there is a hearing ear. The Word of God repeatedly unites these two. "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear"—but what? "What the Spirit saith unto the churches." The trumpet-sound then is the voice of the Spirit. This was from the door of the Tent of Testimony, that is, with Christ as the governing meaning. Order amongst the Lord's people, in-

dividually and collectively. Progress toward the goal and inheritance. To warn of dangers, and to stir to battle. All this is a matter of hearing the voice of the Spirit. If we bring the principle over to Corinthians we shall—or ought to—be impressed with how large a place the Holy Spirit has in these Letters. Very soon in the first Letter we come on the principle which is an absolutely basic truth, and which runs right through the entire New Testament. This goes right to the heart of the Corinthian situation, as it does to every situation which is one of spiritual declension and weakness. We could fill a whole book with this one truth, because the New Testament has so much show about it. But we can here do no more than indicate it. Right here, then, early in the first Letter to the Corinthians (chapter ii. 6-16), it is

THE ILLUMINATED SPIRITUAL MIND

The fuller truth is that Christ may be—or may have been—presented in great fullness and yet not understood. The Tabernacle was there complete for all Israel to see, but it was a *thing*, a *sacred* thing, and it was known that God was with it, but it was not understood. It was a comprehensive representation, but what it all meant was not understood. The Holy Spirit was present, but the people's minds were not illuminated. It could hardly be said that the "things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard (note, eye and ear) nor hath it entered into the heart of man" had really become a *dynamic revelation* to those Christians. "The Spirit searcheth the deep things of God", but things were pathetically shallow and superficial at Corinth. No one who was hearing the voice of the Spirit in an inward way could possibly behave as they were behaving. I have to confess that it is one of my greatest perplexities how a true Christian can behave, look, and go on so long without the Holy Spirit so speaking in them that changes in conduct, appearance, and habits are spontaneously made without anyone else saying anything. I have to ask: 'Where is the Holy Spirit in them?' Here I just must say some relevant things which—although enlarging this message somewhat—are *very* appropriate to our times. We are in a time in this dispensation when deceiving spirits are invading this earth to such an extent that—to use our Lord's own words—"if it were possible the very elect would be deceived" (Matthew xxiv. 24).

It should be clearly understood that the most outstanding and definite form of deception is *the simulation of the Holy Spirit*. The Christian is so utterly dependent upon the Holy Spirit for every-

thing, especially in the knowledge of Christ that to simulate Him (the Holy Spirit) is the master-stroke of evil *spirits*. The *true* Spirit is assailed by *false* spirits, and chiefly so by imitation. Their imitation will often, or usually, be thought to be something very spiritual. There is a false spirituality. Its most subtle form is to push secondary spiritual things up into a primary place and exaggerate them so that they are believed to be *all-important*! You have it here in I Corinthians, and the Apostle *labours* to correct this because of its perils. See what he says about the *graded* importance of gifts. To these poor deluded Corinthians certain gifts of a display, and spectacular kind were the height of spirituality. This opened the door wide to the false in many ways. The sum of all deception is the projecting, assertion, and intensity of natural (soul) force. Deception came into this world through the soul of Eve, and Satan's link with humanity is just there. This is basic to Paul's strong corrective teaching, and in the first part of this first Letter he lays this as the foundation of all that follows. His warning corrective about women asserting themselves vocally and in other ways in Church life and matters, and his—to some people—strange talk about “covering” and “the angels” has a far more sinister implication than will be regarded.

Another form which deception takes is (and perhaps you will find it hard to believe it) superiority to the Word of God. Yes! It is possible to be so ‘spiritual’ as to blatantly violate the plain Word of God on the plea: “I felt led”, “The Lord showed me”, and so on. A man can neglect his plain duty as laid down in Scripture to wife and family, and eventually lose all influence with them and their respect because he is so ‘spiritual’. We say this in particular reference to the Christian family. A wife can be so ‘spiritual’ as to violate the plain injunction: “Wives, be in subjection to your own husbands.” He may not be so ‘spiritual’ as you think he ought to be, but the Lord will honour the wife who, with the Cross in her own soul, honours His Word. The Word of God says that if a man does not work he should not eat. It is possible to be so

‘spiritual’ as to spend many hours, and even months of life doing nothing of any vital account. These are only examples of superiority to the Word of God; there are many more, and much worse.

The projecting of soul-life will most certainly result in deception, and the fruit of deception is just this: many psychic experiences, such as ‘voices’ apparitions, coincidences, which just go *so far* as to seem of God and then abort and nothing comes of them. They leave a trail of unfinished, incomplete and disappointing ‘experiences’. Satan can lead the intensely soulish person ‘up the garden’, as we say.

Now all this is in the Corinthian Letters and explains Israel's tragedy in the wilderness. Why did a journey of nine days develop into forty years and then end in tragedy? This Letter tells us; and Hebrews iv. 12 (with context) puts it concisely and precisely! The soul-life asserted itself against or over the *truly* spiritual.

I expect that I shall get into a lot of hot water for saying some of these things, but things are in a very serious condition in these times and we *must* be faithful. I confess that the more I have got into these Corinthian Letters the more desperate I have felt the situation to be, and the more impelled to seek the explanation.

Well, we have not finished yet, but, dear readers, do you not now see why the Apostle said: “Nothing . . . but Jesus Christ, and him crucified”—“Christ—crucified”? The Cross is the solution!

Back, for a moment, to where we started. We said that the silver trumpets were the voice of the Holy Spirit, and that a hearing ear is essential to hear “what the Spirit saith”. And then we have gone on to raise questions about hearing. But do note, please, how we have related the hearing. We said that first Christ has to be seen by the spiritual eye. The spirit only speaks about Christ! Then we said that *order*, movement, waiting, or going, when and where, were consistent with Christ in character, nature, and holiness. And the great altar was at the door through which the way of the the voice of the trumpets was heard.

GOD'S NEW ISRAEL (IV)

AT the commencement of these messages we made one statement which was to cover all that follows. That declaration was that the New Testament is built upon the ground of the Old Testament; that is, that what God was doing in a temporal

and earthly way then, He is doing in a heavenly and spiritual way now. There is no change in His purpose, nor in His principles: the change is in His method. His one purpose is to take out of the nations a people for His name (Acts xv. 14).

In this part of the world's history God is working to secure out of the nations a new spiritual Israel (Galatians vi. 16 and the whole context of I Peter ii. 4-10—note verse 10). He is constituting this spiritual Israel upon the principles of the old Israel. That first Israel failed Him, violated all His spiritual principles, and broke His covenant (Hebrews viii. 9). (Note the whole nature and purpose of the Letter to the Hebrews!) This is the nation to which Christ referred when He said to 'official' Israel: "The kingdom of heaven shall be taken away from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof", i.e. the fruits of the Kingdom of heaven, a phrase which always related to the Gospel to all the nations. This is a nation out of *all* the nations.

I am fully aware that there is a large body of Bible students standing at my elbow—so to speak—feverishly wanting to challenge me regarding the future of the Jewish nation with all the questions about Palestine and present developments there. This whole matter has divided Bible teachers and their respective followers into two main schools. Dr. Schofield leads the one school, i.e. the "Suspended Kingdom" school with a definite future for the Jewish nation. Dr. Campbell Morgan (pre-eminent as a Bible teacher in his generation) categorically denied the future for Israel (as such) teaching. We refuse to be drawn into a contention for either view. What we *are* saying with emphasis is that for *this* dispensation, "upon whom the ends of the ages are come" (I Corinthians x. 11), "Once at the end of the ages . . ." (Hebrews ix. 26), the earthly Israel is in rejection, and the new heavenly Israel—the Church—is in the forefront of God's work. Touch this earth and world in any way and you touch confusion, frustration, and death! So we say with Nehemiah: "I am doing a great work so that I cannot come down."

No one will think for a moment that what we have said implies that we have no concern for the Jews. Jews are to contribute as much to the New Israel as are the Gentiles, but not as Jews or Gentiles, but a New Creation. We are as much concerned for the salvation of Jews as we are for anybody!

Let us proceed with the matter immediately on hand. We are now going to be occupied with

THE EMANCIPATION OF ISRAEL

There are few things in the Old Testament which are given a greater place than the emancipation of Israel from Egypt, and the New Testament makes

it very clear that God is taking His new Israel out of the nations on exactly the same principles as those on which He took out the old Israel. If this is not clear to you, then you must read your New Testament again in the light of what I have just said. All I can do is to put my finger upon some of those spiritual principles of emancipation; but if the old Israel's emancipation was a tremendous thing, as we shall see as we go on, the emancipation of the new spiritual Israel is still greater. That means that to be a true child of God is a far greater thing than being a Jew of Israel.

Well, as you see, we are in the early chapters of the book of Exodus, and perhaps later on we shall move into the book of Numbers.

Now for some of these spiritual principles.

1. *The emancipation of Israel from Egypt had a spiritual background.*

How did God Himself sum up that emancipation? He comprehended the whole thing in one statement in Exodus xii. 12: "*Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgements.*"

It was not Pharaoh in the first place, for he was only an instrument; nor was it the Egyptians in the first place, for they were but the victims. It was the gods of the Egyptians. Behind Pharaoh and behind the Egyptians there was an evil spiritual system—and there is one verse in the New Testament which tells us all about that: ". . . principalities . . . powers . . . world-rulers of this darkness . . . spiritual hosts of wickedness" (Ephesians vi. 12). Those were all the gods of the Egyptians, set over against the one God of Israel, and the contest was not between God, or Moses, and the Egyptians, but between God and the gods of the Egyptians.

I may not take the time to go into detail, but the Egyptians worshipped the River Nile. There was the god of the Nile—so God turned the River Nile into blood. The Egyptians worshipped frogs. The frog was as sacred in Egypt as the cow is in India. These just indicate that God was getting behind things and was dealing with a great spiritual system. The emancipation of Israel was emancipation from a spiritual system—and that is true of the emancipation of every believer from this world's system. This world is governed by a spiritual system which is behind it, and every man and woman is in bondage to that system. The Word of God says that "the whole world lieth in the evil one" (I John v. 19), and if you do not believe that of yourself, then I would suggest that you try to get out of this world system. You would find that your emancipation is a much bigger thing than you think!

So the emancipation of Israel and the Church is

from a spiritual background of a very powerful system, and redemption is a tremendous thing.

2. *The emancipation of Israel was an exhibition of ultimate strength.*

Of course, God could have just wiped out Egypt with one word. He who spoke the word and the creation came into being could have spoken and Egypt would have been dismissed from history; but God was teaching men a great lesson. He was not teaching Himself. He was teaching, first of all, this principle in Egypt, and was teaching something to Israel, the old and the new, the nations and the devil.

Here we have, then, an exhibition of final power. God is slowly but steadily drawing out the power of this evil system, exhausting all the power of the evil principalities. Each one of these ten judgments is an increase upon the one that went before. God is saying: 'If you resist Me on that, very well, have some more!', and you notice that in the tenth judgment He has gone far beyond all the ten powers in Egypt. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (I Corinthians xv. 26). That is the full and final power against God, but the "power of His resurrection" is "the exceeding greatness of His power", and it exceeds all power in this universe.

Dear friends, have we *really* understood the greatness of our salvation? Have we really appreciated what it means to be a member of this new Israel? What was the great note of the Apostles as they went over the world? Men and devils killed the Prince of Life! They did the last thing that they could do, extended themselves to the last act of their power. There was nothing more that they could do, but the shout of the Apostles everywhere is: 'God raised Him! You killed Him, but *God* raised Him!' This is something beyond all the power of evil spirits and men, and it is a principle upon which God is constituting His new Israel. No wonder that the Apostle Paul, who had seen this, cried: 'Oh, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection! If the fellowship of His sufferings will result in that, all right!' It was an exhibition of ultimate strength, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail.

3. *The emancipation of Israel was an expression of the virtue of the Blood of the Lamb.*

You know Exodus xii. in which the Passover lambs are slain, but I wonder if you have recognized *where* the Passover lambs were slain! There was no temple, no tabernacle and no altar, so where were the lambs slain? They were slain on the threshold of

every house, and the blood of the lamb was sprinkled on the two side posts and on the lintel. What have you there? A circle of blood—a national circumcision. The nation was circumcised that night, and circumcision was the sign of the covenant, the sign that the people were *God's* people. They were in a covenant of blood with God, and that is a covenant of life. The Egyptians were not under that covenant. Their first-born died that night, but Israel lived, and they went out through this circle of blood—the mighty virtue of the blood of the lamb.

Well, all Christians know about that! Our Christian life begins there, with the mighty virtue of the Blood of Jesus, and it will end there. The fullness of God's new Israel, taken out of every nation and kindred and tongue! What are they singing in glory? "Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain!" (Revelation v. 12). Oh, the mighty virtue of the Blood of the Lamb! Do you not thank the Lord for that every time you pray? I can never pray without remembering the precious Blood, for it is the way out of death into life.

4. *The presence of Israel in Egypt was an expression of the menace the elect is to this world.*

This battle in Egypt revealed a very wonderful thing—what a menace the elect is to this world. The presence of Israel in Egypt was like a thorn in the side of the Egyptians, and every day poor Pharaoh was feeling that thorn in his flesh. He would say: "There is a people in my realm who are a threat to my kingdom. I killed all their male babies and now they have become six hundred thousand men, without women and children. What am I going to do with these people? If they go on like this I will have no place left for myself, for they will take the kingdom of this world.' Have your minds leapt over into the New Testament? 'What can I do with these people? I will give them as hard a time as I can and do everything that I can to make them serve my interests.' Can you see the work of the devil in this present age? Is the prince of this world making it as hard as he can for the people of God? Is his mind set upon making them serve his interests? That is the nature of the battle, and you only have to leap right over into the wilderness with the Lord Jesus during the forty days and forty nights. The prince of this world came to Him personally and tried to get Him to compromise, to accept the kingdoms of this world on *his* terms. "All this will I give Thee if Thou wilt worship me." 'If You will serve my interests I will give You a prize!' And behind his words there was this: 'If You don't, woe betide You! There will be a Cross for You! And I will rally all my princi-

palities and powers and concentrate them upon You on that Cross.' The Lord Jesus gained the victory in that battle! The devil did his worst, but what is the verdict of the Word of God? Read it again in the letter to the Colossians: "(He) stripped off from himself the principalities and the powers and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross."

Dear friends, this applies to the new Israel. It applies to us here. We, as the Lord's people in this world, are a menace to Satan, a menace and a threat to his kingdom, and he knows that unless he destroys us we are going to take the kingdom—and, praise God, we are! "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke xii. 32). But what a big word: "Fear not!"

Well, there are four mighty principles. We could, of course, spend hours on every one of them, but "what seest thou?" Are you getting some light? Are you seeing that Satan will do everything in his power to keep you from breaking away from his kingdom? If you are still in spiritual bondage, do not put it down to secondary causes. Do not say: 'Well, it is because of so-and-so . . . it is because of my husband . . . it is because of my wife', or it might be a thousand and one other things. You go right to the root cause of it! If you are in spiritual bondage and darkness, it is the prince of this world who has put you in prison, and you will have to appeal to the victory won on Calvary by the Lord Jesus, and take your position by faith in the virtue of the Blood of Jesus.

If you are a true child of God, if you have come out of bondage, are you seeing now why the devil tries to give you such a bad time? Do you see why he will make it as hard as he can for you? The explanation is that he is afraid of you! Yes, Satan is afraid of the true Church. He is not afraid of the imitation church, of the false Israel, but he is afraid of the elect, and he does not give them an easy time.

THE NEW WORLD

Well, the people are out of their bondage in Egypt and are out unto the Lord. What about it? They are in a new place, a place that they have never been in before. They are not accustomed to anything in this place. They are in another world which is altogether different from the one in which they have been living. Yes, they have a real joy in being out and sing the song of redemption:

"I am redeemed, O praise the Lord!"

But what kind of a world is this into which they—and we—have come?

We are strangers in this world! What is it that Peter is saying? "I beseech you as *sojourners and pilgrims* . . ." (I Peter ii. 11). Somehow we do not seem to belong here, and we have to learn everything all over again. Well, in Egypt we could at least *see* where our bread was coming from. It may not have been everything that we would like, but every time we needed food there was at least something to see. We knew that at a certain time someone would sound a trumpet and call out: 'Come to the cookhouse!' We could see things in Egypt! Things were such that we could handle them, and we did know that our meals would be provided at the right time, but what kind of a life is this? We cannot see anything here. We just do not know what is going to happen out here! We are absolutely dependent upon supernatural power. This is a most unnatural life! Well, from time to time, God works a miracle. We have a very wonderful experience of Him, and then it is as though He goes away and leaves us, and this unnatural life goes on.

Do you know what I am talking about? Is that true to the Christian life?

We have come into a new place, and in this place *God* has to be everything. We have to prove Him every day, and we are tested by the very place into which we have come. We say: 'We are going out with the Lord.' All right—but do you know what that means? It is going out to the Lord, and to the Lord only. Out in this new place we seem to be suspended between heaven and earth. What is the meaning of this new place? Well, all our natural abilities and facilities are useless. I have more than once flown over that wilderness in the days of flying boats which did not go very high, and from six thousand feet I could see everything in the wilderness; and I came to one conclusion: it would be a hopeless thing to bring a plough into that, or to sow corn in that! That would soon break any farmer's heart! Fancy living in that for forty years! Only God Almighty could keep you alive in that! So it was for these people—but what did this new place mean?

TESTING OF MOTIVES

First of all, it was the place where their motives were tested. What is the motive that has brought you to this place? Did you come out to the Lord in your own interests, or for the Lord? If your motive was a 'self' motive, you are going to die

out here, but if it really was for the Lord, only He will carry you through this.

PROBATION FOR A LIFE OF
THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The second thing about the new place was that it was the probation for a life of the power of the Holy Spirit. The book of Joshua is the book of the power of the Holy Spirit, and shows that you will never come into that power if you have selfish, personal motives. Your spiritual circumcision is going to be tested here: Is it all of the Lord, or is there something of myself?

In the New Testament there are two books which are set right in this new place, and in them you have Christians between Egypt and the land; and it is all a question of motive.

In the first letter to the Corinthians the Christians are with Israel in the wilderness. Their motives are being tested, and in chapter ten Israel's failure in the wilderness is used as a warning to Christians.

Then there is the letter to the Hebrews. There was a time when Israel in the wilderness said: 'Let us go back into Egypt! Things are too difficult for us this way.' Stephen said in Acts vii: "(They) turned back in their hearts unto Egypt". You see, their hearts were not truly circumcised. In the letter to the Hebrews, those Hebrew Christians who were having a difficult time, were inclined to go back, and Israel's example is taken as a very solemn warning, and the writer says: "They (Israel)

were not able to enter in because of unbelief" (Hebrews iii. 19). But the word in the letter to the Hebrews again and again is: "Let us go on!" "Let us . . . let us . . . let us . . ." "Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest, that no man fall after the same example of disobedience" (iv. 11). This world is a great power, and that power is set against our going on to God's full purpose. First it will do all that it can to keep us from coming out to God, and then it will exercise its power to turn us back. But there is another power, what Paul calls: "the power that worketh in us" (Ephesians iii. 20), and that is a secret and hidden power. You want to feel it, but you do not feel it. What is the evidence of that power? How do you know that there is a power working in you which is greater than all the power of this world? How do I know? I have sometimes thought that the devil has almost exhausted all his schemes to get me back to the old place! I say that very carefully—but how do I know that there is a greater power? Because, after all that the devil has done, and after over sixty years of being out with the Lord, I am still going on! Not by might, not by human strength, and not because of anything in us; we are "kept by the power of God", and we know that power because today we are still out with the Lord. That is a tremendous thing, because of all that has been against.

"What seest thou?" Are you getting a little light? I hope this will explain quite a lot!

(To be continued)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CONFERENCE IN SWITZERLAND, 1970

The Lord willing, we are hoping to have a further conference in Switzerland this year, but in a different location. We are glad to say that we have been able to book a large hotel at Hilterfingen on Lake Thun for the period:

*Monday evening, 14th September, to
Monday morning, 21st September.*

This is a little shorter than the conferences have been in other years, but we hope to compensate for this by having three sessions a day instead of two.

Further details and forms of application for accommodation (available in English, French and German) can be obtained by writing to:

*The Conference Secretary,
Witness and Testimony Literature Trust,
39, Honor Oak Road,
London, S.E.23, England.*

SPECIAL MEETINGS

at

The Christian Fellowship Centre,
39 Honor Oak Road, London, S.E.23.

on

“Good Friday”, 27th March, 1970,
at 11 a.m., 3.30 and 6.30 p.m.

LITERATURE NOTICE

A message, entitled, THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE CROSS, THE CHURCH, AND THE COMING AGAIN OF THE LORD JESUS, by T. Austin-Sparks, is being printed in booklet form (size: 8½" × 3¾") with an attractive art design on the cover.

Supplies of this booklet will be ready during March and orders for it may be placed immediately.

Price: 2/- (\$0.40) per copy, plus postage of 4d. (5 cents) on one copy.

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EDITORIAL

THE LORD IS RISEN INDEED!

THE book which is known to us as "The Acts of the Apostles", and sometimes as "The Acts of the Holy Spirit", could well be truly named: "The Acts of the Risen Lord". Luke—the writer—introduces it with the observation that he had earlier written the beginnings of the acts and teaching of Jesus Christ, implying that his aim is now the continuance thereof.

But, what a change! In the former Jesus was bounded and—to use His own word—"straitened" by time and space. At most, a few square miles of Syrian soil, and, for the most part, Omnipresence in chains, except for a few breakings-through of power at a distance. Then, almost entirely to a people of one nation and tongue. Then, by outward urge, persuasion and constraint, He had His wishes carried out. Then, to the dull minds of the *spiritually* unquickened He gave His spiritual treasures; explanations and reasons were necessary to gain confidence. Then, a non-committal necessity was laid upon Him in the nature of a slow disillusioning of His followers' minds as to what form the end of His earthly life would take, because of the controlling personal interests. Pride, ambition, self-assertiveness, self-assurance, self-

preservation were like barbed wires circling Him around and wounding whenever He sought to break through their narrow mental horizon and exclusiveness. Ever conscious from the beginning that He was appointed for world-dominion as "Heir of all things", yet at present 'not a place to lay His head', and destined to be "crucified through weakness". But, what a change!

Now He has shaken off all His personal chains. Time and space no longer have any power to limit Him. Material things and spiritual forces cannot stand in His way. They are now the agents of His sovereignty. Now, by an inward dynamic, in spite of every threat and peril, men and women are moving out in all directions with a passion for the glory of His name. Now, not as "the Jesus of history", "known after the flesh", but by an inward revelation of transcendent magnitude He is known "after the Spirit". Now, the once-dreaded, unacceptable, offending Cross is all their glory. Now, suffering reproach for His sake has supplanted pride and shame; selfless disinterested sacrifice takes the place of worldly ambition; a mighty energising faith has destroyed doubt; they gladly lay down their lives and suffer the loss of all things

for "the excellency of the knowledge of Him." With one strategic stroke He begins with a multitude representing "every nation under heaven". See how the fire spreads without artificial agencies! Dr. Fairbairn has given us a classic record of this spreading flame:

"In the year 33 A.D. a few Galilean fishermen were seeking liberty of speech in Jerusalem, and were hardly handled as men poor and ignorant.

"In the year that Paul died, how did the matter stand? There were churches in Jerusalem, Nazareth, Caesarea, in all Syria, Antioch, Ephesus, Galatia, Sardis, Laodicea, in all the towns on the west coast throughout lesser Asia, in Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth, Rome, Alexandria, in the chief cities of the islands and the mainland of Greece, and the western Roman colonies."

Surely the exclamation of our title is true: "The Lord is risen indeed!"

What we have to do, then, is to recover the principles which accounted for this phenomenal expression of the glorious truth in that exclamation. The Book of the Acts contains all the Divine principles for the work of the risen Lord for this dispensation. Whenever those principles have been honoured and governing, there has been a fresh expression of the wonder of His risen power. This we are going to see. But, first we have to dismiss false ideas which have become accretions to Christianity. It is a matter of being quite clear as to what Christianity is *not*.

I. *The first Apostles and messengers of the Gospel did not consider themselves to have been charged with a new teaching.*

There is nothing in the whole story upon which to build an argument or affirmation that the Apostles went out to the world with "*the teaching of Jesus*". They were not propagating new doctrines or a system of truth. It was not a new ideology, i.e. system of ideas. The teaching came *after* the acceptance of their testimony and was the explanation of the fundamental *facts* of experience or faith. It was the expounding of the contents of the basic truths. The most that they did, to begin with, was to announce facts and substantiate their testimony from the Word of God, and affirm the facts concerning Jesus Christ.

II. *Christianity was not conceived by the Apostles to be a new religion.*

It was not set over against, or alongside of, other religions and made "Comparative". It was only gradually that some of the first Apostles themselves realised the implications of their new position as being emancipated from Judaism, but that

did become real and clear, even if their former allegiance had a carryover in their constitution and emotions. They found themselves *out* and committed even against their own former prejudices, and they did their thinking and arguing after the thing had happened in them. The inward reality may have been an embarrassment sometimes, but they never thought in terms of having changed one religion for another. See Peter in the home of Cornelius, and the events in Acts X, XI, XV, etc. III. *Christianity was not thought or spoken of as a new "Movement"*.

No plans were laid. There was no "Policy". Organisation was practically nil, and any little bit which subsequently had to be admitted was forced upon them by the embarrassment of the very vitality of things, not to secure success!

A thought-out campaign did not exist. To set up, launch, form, bring into being, or found a new "Society", sect, "Church" or community was not considered or visualised. They did not set out with such ideas, although their testimony gave distinctiveness to all who believed; distinctiveness of life, character, and behaviour, and outsiders did what they always do, that is, gave them a label: "Christians". This was a misapprehension and misinterpretation of their motive.

What, then, was their testimony? All-inclusively it was the proclamation and affirmation of a *Fact*. That Fact was—and is—*The Universal Sovereignty and Lordship of Jesus Christ as the Son of God established and vindicated by His resurrection from the dead.*

It is, however, very important, as an abiding law, to remember that this was a *testimony*, not just a creed. That is, it came out of a tremendous experience. What had happened objectively and historically had had its counterpart in them; it had a tremendous and revolutionising effect in their own being. The resurrection of Jesus was an inward power and dynamic. A new and other life had been put within them by the Holy Spirit. That life in Him which had conquered death as the all-inclusive enemy, the sum of enemies, had been implanted in them on the Day of Pentecost. Their testimony then was—not only in word, but in power—that Jesus lives triumphantly and universally as "Lord of all". That life, given them when Jesus left death and the grave behind as conquered foes, was not just a new mode of life, it was a vital force which had burst all the old wineskins of tradition and formalism, and systems which had served their purpose. It was irresistible, indestructible, and "eternal"; the life of a new creation. It was this vital energy which initiated and dynamited 'mis-

sionary' activity. No appeals for missionaries, workers, or missionary propaganda are found in the New Testament. The Holy Spirit was the Custodian of the world-purpose of God, and concern that Christ should have His inheritance in the nations (Psalm ii. 8) was the evidence that the Holy Spirit had been received and given His full place. The testimony *registered* in the kingdom of Satan, and it was impossible for this testimony to come into any new part of his domain without hell rising up to defend its territory. The Lord's indictment of churches later on was because they had settled down and lost their impact!

We have now laid our foundation, and we can proceed to see how, when the principle has been operative, something spiritually vital has resulted, and something very much akin to the first years of Christianity has issued.

Here are

SOME NOTABLE EXAMPLES

We have before us the records of some movements of God that have been effectual and fruitful in the world testimony of the Lord Jesus. One is the amazing story of those great days in the beginning of the Moravian mission. In the first twenty years they actually sent out more missionaries than the whole Protestant Church had done in two hundred years. Of the closed lands entered, the sufferings gladly endured, the range covered, the lives lived and laid down, the grace of God manifested, it stirs wonder and shame to read. Someone has said that "if members of the Protestant churches went out as missionaries in corresponding numbers there would have been a force of missionaries more than the number estimated as necessary to achieve the evangelization of the world."

Our purpose is not to tell that whole story, but to ask what lay behind it? In the first place, the Cross had been deeply wrought into the very being of those people. Their country had been made a very field of blood by massacre. They were driven from their homes. They were reduced from three million to one million in population by persecution for their faith. Indeed, it sometimes appeared as if they would be entirely extinguished. Out of this fire of affliction there arose a company purified with another fire burning in their bones. It was the fire of a passionate love for the Lord Jesus. The meetings of these brethren, when later possible, breathe the atmosphere of "The Upper Room" in Jerusalem. Covenants were made that self in all its forms should be entirely banished: self-will, self-love, self-interest, self-seeking. To

be poor in spirit would be their quest, and every one would give himself to be taught by the Holy Spirit. A prayer-watch was set up which would burn day and night, and in relays an entire twenty-four hours was occupied in seeking the Lord. "To win for the Lamb that was slain the reward of His sufferings" was their adopted motto. All this is its own argument. Here that deep, inwrought work of the Cross issued in a mighty personal love for the Lord Jesus.

That is the first principle which we recognize as being basic to the early New Testament power and spread of the Gospel.

We pass to a second example to note another principle. We refer to the early days of the "China Inland Mission", as it came to be named. Let us say at once that that work was born of a spiritual truth, a fundamental truth of New Testament Christianity. It was the vital reality of union with Christ. With all his vision and passion for Christ to be known in Inland China, it is well known that as he went from place to place in this and other countries, addressing Christians, Mr. Hudson Taylor said comparatively little about China, and often nothing at all. He poured out his spiritual message to bring the Lord's people to the fuller knowledge of what union with Christ means. The central and supreme thing in this fellowship with the Lord was *the universal efficacy of prayer*. Listen to him:

"In the study of the Divine Word I learned that to obtain successful workers, not elaborate appeals for help, but earnest prayer to God . . . and the deepening of the spiritual life of the Church, so that men should be unable to stay at home, were what was needed."

Were we to put the inner history of this work—the original spiritual background—into a few words, we should say that it was not the history of organization, advocacy, propaganda, appeals, or advertising, but of a man with a deep knowledge of God born of the Cross being deeply inwrought, with a spiritual ministry to the Lord's people as to fullness of life in Christ and the practical outworkings of such a life in prayer. Everything in him and in that work turned upon the real meaning of union with Christ. This is revealed in a letter to his sister printed in the second volume of his "Life".

Is it not perfectly patent how this—in principle—corresponds to what we have in the Book of the Acts?

To use the words of the writer of the Hebrew Letter: "And what can we more say? For time would fail to tell of . . ." In distinguishing the Divine principles and methods in beginnings we could instance quite a few more.

Take the case of "The Christian and Missionary Alliance". There are very few instrumentalities of God since apostolic times which have ministered spiritual blessing over a large area of the world more than has this agency. I came into touch with this ministry in the latter part of the life of Dr. A. B. Simpson and the years since. My purpose is not to narrate the story of the Alliance, but to do two things. One, to say that the *spiritual* enrichment to the Church of God has been exceptional through this vessel. The other, to emphasise the apostolic or Divine principle which accounts for that spiritual seed-plot of intrinsic values. Anyone who has read the life of A. B. Simpson, either in the official and original record, or in Dr. Tozer's "Wingspread" will know that all the work and worldwide ministry sprang from a deep, radical, and utter abandon to the Lord Himself. Through much stripping, devastating, and desolating experience, that servant of God came into a very intimate knowledge of his Lord. Dr. Simpson, although so thoroughly brought up and trained in Presbyterianism, outgrew all the confines of denominationalism. There was no "wineskin" strong or large enough to retain the new wine of his spiritual measure and vitality. His Christian conferences, especially at Old Orchard, were a way of enriching many with spiritual measure. The phrase which became characteristic of Dr. Simpson, and uniquely so, was "the Fullness of Christ". In those days that phrase had a newness and music which registered; but it is a term which, by reason of familiarity, has lost some of its impact now. It was out of that *spiritual measure* that the world vision was born, and that passion for "the Fullness of Christ" accounts for the "Alliance". Here we

are back again at the principle of all *God's* new beginnings.

The same principle can be noted in so many other instances. It was the rich, deep ministry of Dr. Andrew Murray that accounted for the South Africa General Mission and its early spiritual strength. The Keswick Convention, with its original purpose of "the Deepening of the Spiritual Life", based on Romans vi., has been no small means of missionary enlargement and spiritual support.

The evidence is overwhelming that God moves by way of a deep and full knowledge of Christ; it is not just theory or academic knowledge, but a knowledge born out of a deep work of the Cross in spiritual history with God. Such are His beginnings, and to have God's "New Thing" those principles must be recovered. 'Recovered' implies loss. It is sadly true that even in the last days of the Apostles Paul and John there are evidences of incipient change toward a systematizing and crystallizing of Christianity, with loss of the *purely spiritual* character and nature. So it is that men *will* make a movement from heaven into a form and institution on earth. In speaking to the most responsible man in one of these "Missions" about the decline in spiritual power since their beginning, he fully agreed, and then asked: 'But what can we do?' When I said that perhaps much recovery would take place if all the responsible leaders were called together for two weeks of prayer, heartsearching, and consideration of the spiritual principles of their beginning, he said: 'Yes, I believe that would be of great value, but it cannot be; all our men are too busy.'

Too busy to recover the full impact of "The Lord is risen indeed"!

T. AUSTIN-SPARKS

THE MISSION, THE MEANING, AND THE MESSAGE OF JESUS CHRIST

9. IN THE LETTERS TO THE CORINTHIANS (*continued*)

THERE is one more message in relation to our particular theme at this time before we leave the Corinthian Letters. We have observed that, by many allusions, these two Letters find the believers to whom they were addressed, spiritually where Israel were when in the wilderness, that is, between

Egypt and the Land of Promise; between the Exodus—the coming out—and the Eisodos—the entering in. We have seen how precarious that position is, and therefore how strong the warnings are as taken from Israel's tragic failure.

We are now seeing how our main title above

applies to that situation. The Second Letter to the Corinthians has some very rich things in it. Of course, commentators almost universally interpret or define it as the Letter of the Christian ministry, and that is summed up in the words in chapter iv, verse 1: "Therefore, seeing we have this ministry." We have often taken that clause in the particular connection, i.e. the ministry of the Church. But for our present purpose we light upon another immensely rich and comprehensive phrase. In the same chapter, verse 4, we have: "... the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ"; and then, in verse 6: "... God, that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." How rich! Break it up: "The glory of Christ." "The gospel of the glory of Christ." "The light of the gospel of the glory of Christ." "The face of Jesus Christ." "The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." "The light of the knowledge of the glory of God." "The knowledge of the glory of God." Every clause is a theme!

In the context the Apostle makes a great transition with a comparison and a contrast: from Moses to Christ. He is emphasising the startling and shattering effect upon the people of the glory of God *on* the face of Moses. He is very strong on that point, and thus prepares the way for his particular message. The comparison is in *the same* glory; but the contrast is threefold: one, the glory *in* the face of Jesus Christ, and, two, the *exceeding* glory of the latter, leading to three, the effect in each case. The former was a ministry of death, the death-sentence of the Law: the latter was life, the life which comes by grace. This is the transformation implicit in the wilderness; it is the ministry of life in surrounding death. It is the glory of grace in the realm of condemnation. All this, says the Apostle, is focused in "the face of Jesus Christ". The face is the register, the index, the medium of character, of personality. The glory was *on* the face of Moses. It was not his own personal perfection of character, divine nature. It was *in* the face of Jesus Christ, "who is the image of God" (iv. 4). It was *therefore* a surpassing glory. Earlier the Apostle says that we are "*reflecting* . . . the glory of God". It is not inherent in us; we are but "mirrors" (iii. 18, margin).

The point of all this, for Corinthians and for all Christians, is that in a wilderness world like Corinth, and the world generally, it is not necessary to perish, to die. It is not necessary to fail and not reach the inheritance. Israel's tragedy need not

overtake us, because, although we are but "vessels of fragile clay" (iv. 7—Conybeare), there is "the exceeding greatness of the power", which is "of God, and not of ourselves" (iv. 7).

This is the Mission, the Meaning, the Message of Jesus Christ to His Church as in the world where there is nothing else to help. It is the message to "pilgrims and strangers" here.

The Apostle will take much space in this Letter to meet the cruelty, opposition, criticism, slander, and discrediting work of his enemies, some of them Christians. His inclusive and most powerful answer to them is in this "God hath shined into our hearts." It is the glory which we have beheld in the face of Jesus Christ. We may be poor and despised "earthen vessels", but there is a "treasure" within, the power of which will bring us to glory. By this spiritual experience and possession we can, and shall, reach God's end "while we look, not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen", which are eternal (iv. 18).

This is true for the wilderness journey, but, says the Apostle, it is true for our "ministry"; a heartening word—if challenging—for the ministers of Christ.

But there is another tremendous allusion running through these two Letters. We have heard the Apostle say that what had happened to him and other Apostles was like that which happened in the creation: "God, that said, Light shall shine" (or: "Let light be") "hath shined in our hearts."

In the second Letter, chapter v, and verse 17, he says: "If any man be in Christ there is a new creation." God said: "Let there be light." "There is a new creation." In the first Letter, chapter xv., he refers to the two Adams, the first and the last, in contrast: the earthy and the heavenly. It is not difficult to discern that "in the face of Jesus" we have the new and heavenly order of man and creation. This surely, being in the Corinthian Letters, is set over against the disorder and chaos, the darkness and confusion in the old creation spiritually, the "natural man" of the early part of the first Letter. If this is true, and not just our imagination, we can surely see that the position of Israel in the wilderness, and of the Corinthians correspondingly, is that of transition from the old creation—or before it—to the new; from fallen Adam to the New Man, the Last Adam.

"We all, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed (being changed) into the same image."

(To be continued)

THE PRACTICAL OUTWORKING OF THE WORD OF THE CROSS

IN our first message we considered the word of the Cross and found that it is the power of God. Next we considered that there is only one voice in the universe that can bring us the word of the Cross, and that is the voice of the Good Shepherd. That voice can be recognized in every one of the Lord's servants who truly follows Him; otherwise we only hear the words spoken, and, though they may be true, we do not recognize the voice of God. Then we considered the results of the preaching of the word of the Cross, and found that they are very profound. The word of the Cross creates a deep change in the man who is exposed to it, a change from spiritual pride to true humility, from contempt of men to Divine love for even the basest of them; it gives him a profound work to do for the Lord; and it gives him a profound conception of the Church of Christ and its calling.

But someone might now ask me this question: Could you not give us some practical advice in order that we may *experience* all this? We like the truth of it all, but what can we do to get a true experience corresponding to the truth that we see and understand?

The Apostle Paul gives us three pieces of very good and very practical advice, which we will now consider.

1. "*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly*" (Colossians iii. 16)

Notice what Paul says—"Let the word of *Christ* . . .". What does he mean by that? Does he not mean the word of the Bible? Then why does he not say so? Because of his own experience! Before his conversion he knew the Bible; the word of the Bible dwelt richly in him and he used it greatly—to kill as many people as possible! Now he does not want to repeat that experience, nor does he want the Church to repeat it—but the Church *has* repeated it, over and over again. My experience is that no one can be as cruel as Christians can, especially when they think they know the Bible. I cannot tell you how many dear old saints have come to me and told me what is in the Bible! They bang their fists on the table and say: 'It is in the Bible. Why don't you do it?' I have met that again and again, and these people are convinced that they are right and that they are doing right.

You see, the Bible can be used in a literal sense—its "letter" bereft of its spirit—and "the letter killeth" (II Corinthians iii. 6)—and the Christians killed one another gladly in the name of the Lord! They did it in order to build the Church. But this is

what we spoke of in our second message—the word, but not the voice. Thus, when a strong Christian enters your room and says: "This—or that—is found in the Bible, so you must do it and organize your church along that line", just give him this answer: 'Dear brother, I give you a fortnight to examine yourself before the Lord to find whether the spirit of I Corinthians xiii. is found in your heart and in your mouth. Will you please read that chapter once a day, or even once an hour, for fourteen days, and then come back to me and tell me, not what is in the Bible, but what the word of Christ is.' *Never* enter into an argument with strong Christians! They are much too clever. They have examined the Bible and know everything about it, but they have never given the Bible a chance to examine them, and, therefore, the word of Christ does not dwell richly in them or among them. So they gladly kill the Lord's servants and destroy the Church, thinking they are serving the Lord.

The word of Christ is the word of the Cross, and if the Bible has not become the word of the Cross to you, you run the risk of destroying and killing, instead of giving life and health. All strong Christians run that risk. They use the word of the Bible and do mighty things for God. They can bring into being great movements which grow and increase, and they can point to the Word as that which supports all they do and say, but God never gave us the Word as a weapon with which to fight for the truth. If you want to fight for the truth, all you can do is to give your life, and that is the best weapon. It is easy to take the lives of others: that is the spirit of the Inquisition—fighting for truths by taking the lives of others and using the Word of God in support. But the Inquisition has not stopped, and it is not confined to the Roman Church. The spirit of the Inquisition can be found in any strong Christian. If the Lord has really revealed His truth to you, He has not done it in order that you should take the lives of others, but that you might have the honour of giving yourself, your own life, in defence of the truth. That is the word of Christ! "Father, forgive them! . . ."; "I lay down my life . . ." Let *that* word dwell richly in you!

The Lord Himself said a profound and wonderful thing about this word: "The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life" (John vi. 63). Have you ever thought about that? When that word of Christ is given it not only describes spirit

and life, but it *is* spirit and life. It creates what it says. You see, the word of the Bible as such can describe life for you. It can describe what ministry is. It can describe the Church. But it cannot do more than give a description, and therefore people have themselves to do what they have seen described in the Bible. That is the reason why so many try to make a New Testament Church. Strong Christians have told them, with their Bible in their hand, how things ought to be. (And may I, in parenthesis, give you a piece of very naughty advice? When you meet a very strong Christian who says: 'Submit to what I say!' make your neck as stiff as possible!) Those strong Christians can give you a wonderful description of how things should be and will fight anyone who stands up against them, but they do not create anything. They simply leave this description of how things ought to be with those over whom they have had any influence, and then expect them by their own means to work it out.

But the word of Christ, the word given through broken men, gives much more than a description. The living Lord, the Creator of all things, speaks through them, and He does not operate like an artist giving a description. He operates as a Creator, and His word *is* spirit and *is* life, and it is only through that word that the work of the Lord is being done and the Church is built.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." What is the result of that? It is that you teach and admonish one another in all wisdom. Can you sense the difference between an atmosphere where the word is used as a hammer, and an atmosphere where the word of Christ is being heard? Where the word of Christ is there is also wisdom, *Divine* wisdom, and that leads us back again to the Cross, because the Cross of Christ *is* the wisdom of God; and in the spirit of the Cross we can speak about everything, loving one another, paying respect to one another, and seeing truly that the other one is greater than we are. In that spirit we can teach and admonish, and Christ is at work in *that* atmosphere; He builds His Church in that atmosphere; and there is a note of true, deep joy, even happiness, in that atmosphere, so that Paul speaks of "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God." (And now comes another piece of naughty advice! When a very strong Christian comes to you and says: 'This is in the Bible and you must do it', say to him: 'Dear brother, let us start with five of Sankey's hymns!') Well, if the Lord's children cannot sing together, then they cannot teach one another anything at all. "Let the word of *Christ* dwell in you *richly*."

2. "And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Colossians iii. 17).

This is just the same thing, but it is said in different words. It is the result of the working of the Cross in any man who exposes himself to it, which means that he does not do anything any longer in his own name, that is, in his own strength and energy. He does not even speak about the Lord or teach others in his own name. The more certain you are of your own position, the weaker you are, for our strong points are always our weak ones. If you are very certain and quite convinced that you are right, then you will speak in your own name. You do not even have to look to the Lord, for you know everything. You know the Bible, so you speak freely in your own name, and you are quite convinced that, with the Bible in your hand, you are doing the work of the Lord. But the more certain you are of a thing, the more you need to depend upon the Lord, for you might misuse the thing you know.

Therefore it says in this profound verse: "Do all in the *name of the Lord Jesus*, giving thanks to God the Father through him", and this thanksgiving means very much. It is not formal; it is thanksgiving from a soul who is dependent upon the Lord and knows that he must receive every word from Him; and therefore he thanks the Lord for it. It is an expression of humility in the deepest sense: 'I am not worthy, Lord, to speak for Thee, so I look to Thee and if, Lord, Thou shouldst say: "Don't speak!" Thou knowest, O Lord, that I dare not open my mouth. I can only speak in Thy name, giving thanksgiving, praise and worship for being allowed to speak for Thee.'

3. "Continue stedfastly in prayer, watching therein with thanksgiving" (Colossians iv. 2).

That, again, is just the same thing, but expressed in another way. It is an expression of total dependence upon the Lord, day and night—for what is prayer? Is it your mastery over God, or is it His mastery over you? If you are a strong Christian, with the letter of the Bible in your hand, you use prayer to serve your own ends, but you are convinced that you fight for the Lord. But if you are exposed to His Cross, then you continue in prayer, and watch, that is, you seek the *Lord's* mind. You watch and look to the Lord, seeking *His* will, *His* mind, *His* way and *His* means.

I am sure Paul had a smile in his eyes when he continued: "Withal praying for us also." He started by saying: 'Watch and pray with thanksgiving', and then he said: 'Pray also for me', but he did not say: 'with thanksgiving'! But if these

people had the mind of the Lord they *would* pray for him with thanksgiving.

Can you see the difference? On the one side there is the great and strong Christian telling you the truth, convinced that he is doing *the* very thing that the Lord wants, praying for you with all his power and might; and, on the other side, there is the man of the Cross, meeting you with the word of Christ, and praying for you with thanksgiving. Which of the two is the Lord's servant? At which of them do you think the powers and principalities tremble?

Who is building with wood, hay and stubble, and who is building with gold, silver and costly stones?

I trust that all of us can see on which side we would like to stand. If you would like to stand on the side of him who is the man of the Cross, then bow down before your Lord and give Him time to speak to you. Never make yourself the instrument of a man's programme, but become, and remain, a slave of the Lord. This, too, can be done, and it shall be done, but *only* through Him!

P. M.

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

A MOTTO FOR LIFE

READERS of "A Witness and A Testimony" will know that every year there is a Motto Card with a message for that year. For 1970 we had some most encouraging texts, designed in two colours, Oxford and Cambridge blues.

I had a packet of these to send to various friends, and planned to keep the last one for myself, so that I would have a message from the Word of God to see me through the year.

When all the other cards had been sent away I looked at the last one, and when I looked I had a great surprise. Something had gone wrong! The words in Cambridge blue had not been printed at all, so this left me with a card on which the dark blue letters stood out all alone with big spaces between them. What a strange card!

I looked at it again and then I noticed that the first word was ANYTHING. What did it mean? Strangely enough, the next word underneath it was NOTHING. I looked down a bit and over to the side and there I saw another word. It was the simple statement: "POSSIBLE".

Was this, I asked myself, the only message left for me with which I could go through the year? Was it a sort of dark hint or warning—"Anything . . . possible"? Well, in a sense it is true for all of us when we face the unknown future—anything is possible.

Elijah might have had this given to him when he first began to pray about his country's spiritual need. He little knew what was going to happen; it might be anything. All kinds of strange things did

occur which he could never have imagined, such as having to be fed by ravens and then having to ask help from a foreign widow woman who was herself near to starvation. Anything, yes, anything could be possible, for the future was full of difficulties.

As I looked down to the next word I read: "Nothing". Nothing is possible! Yes, it seemed like that, too, for Elijah when he was praying for the rain to come back after three and a half years without any. When he first started praying on Mount Carmel he sent his servant to look for the expected cloud. Alas! when the man came back his answer was the same as the word on my card—NOTHING! Elijah did not give up, but went on with his prayer. Thinking that now something must be happening, he sent the man again to look for a rain cloud, expecting that it would be surely there after so much prayer. But no, when he came back to Elijah it was only to repeat that hopeless word "Nothing".

Six times he came and went, and on each occasion he brought back the same report. Poor Elijah! He must have felt that the words which spelled out his future were: "Nothing is possible." I looked at my strange card and wondered whether this was God's message to me for 1970. "Nothing is possible." I hoped not!

And of course I remembered that Elijah's story was a happy one in the end, for the seventh time the look-out reported that—yes, there was just a tiny cloud in the sky. Tiny, but at least it was not

"nothing"! It was enough for Elijah to know that the rain was on its way after all; God had answered his prayers.

I wondered what more my card could contain, and on looking down found that the next words were ALL THINGS. First, "Anything", then "Nothing", and now "All Things". These words were actually on a line with the word "possible", so it made a good third line for that day and every day: "All things . . . possible."

These, I knew, were the words of the Lord Jesus Himself. Like Elijah, He might have been tempted to dread the "anything" of the unknown, or the "nothing" of the seemingly hopeless, but He did neither. He was the One who said: "All things are possible . . ." This I knew to be the message of Elijah's life, too. And I felt that if there was anything else on the card it would surely tell me the secret of this hope.

Of course there was another word, only one, but quite enough to give me a message, not for this year only, but for the whole of my life. It was certainly the secret of Elijah's great life, and it can be the

secret for us in a year when "Anything" may happen and when it may sometimes seem that "Nothing" is possible. It was just one word of five letters: TRUST.

Strangely enough, this word is made up of four consecutive letters in the alphabet—"r", "s", "t" and "u". Put together in this way and with the "t" repeated they tell us the secret of a successful year. I tried hard to think of another word which could be made up of some other four consecutive letters, but I could not do so. Perhaps you can find one. Meanwhile it will pay us to think hard of the important last word—Trust:

I am left with the strangest Motto Card I have ever had. It is not artistic, as the proper Oxford and Cambridge blue one is. It hardly seems to make sense. Yet it tells me of the most important thing that I can do; it is a Motto for life—TRUST!

"Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark ix. 23).

H. F.

THE SALT OF THE EARTH

"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men" (Matthew v. 13).

"For every one shall be salted with fire. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost its saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace one with another" (Mark ix. 49, 50).

"Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Luke xiv. 34, 35).

CHRISTIANITY has a tang in it! It is a salty business. It is like the early morning spring breeze off the sea that bites into your face, or, perhaps, a thunderstorm, when you push your face out into the rain and it stings. Or like the aching in your legs and the beating of your heart when you get to the top of a mountain. There is something pungent, biting, about it; there is an edge in Christian-

ity which the Lord Jesus says can be lost. In being Christians we can somehow lose the salt of the whole business, and there is no bite in us. We can be seasonless, insipid Christians.

In three places, one recorded in each of the first three Gospels, our Lord Jesus uses this simile for Christian living. If we lose that 'salt' we are still Christians, but Jesus says in Matthew v. 13 that we are 'good for nothings': "ye are the salt of the earth, but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? *it is henceforth good for nothing.*" We are not even as much use to God as Nebuchadnezzar was, evil man though he could be, for at least he could be used as a chastening rod on God's people. We are not bad enough to be any good to God, and we are not good enough to be any good to God. We are just nothing, 'good for nothings', Christians who have lost their tang.

In Mark ix. 49 the Lord Jesus says: "Everyone shall be salted with fire." If we have lost our saltness, we are not able to be consumed or to burn. We are just like clods. We cannot catch fire, there is no warmth in us, we are muddy and damp, and

there is not very much light coming from us. Amy Carmichael said:

“Let me not sink to be a clod;
Make me Thy fuel, flame of God.”

Christians who lose their salt are but non-burnable clods in the Lord’s eyes.

In Luke xiv. the Lord Jesus says that if we lose our seasoning we are neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill. We are not *fit*. We are out of condition. There is a middle-aged spiritual spread appearing, and we are not able to keep pressing on with the virility of what it means to be a Christian.

I wonder if, as we look at our own Christian lives, at ourselves as a church, and at the state of Christianity in the world, it would be unfair to call to mind these sayings of the Lord Jesus to test ourselves? Are we but ‘good for nothings’ as far as the Gospel is concerned? Are we but clods? Are we really not fit for this whole business of Christian living?

THE EFFECT OF CHRISTIANS IN THE WORLD

The first of these sayings has to do with the world. It was in the Sermon on the Mount, of course, that it was given, and as the multitudes gathered round the Lord Jesus He turned very deliberately to His disciples, not because He was unconcerned with the masses, who were like sheep without a shepherd—for He “was moved with compassion toward them” (Mark vi. 32)—but because He purposed to affect the multitude through His people, who were going to be ‘salt’.

“Ye are the salt of the earth”, He says; and there is something about this biting edge in Christian living which is to do with our attitude to the world, to the multitudes who are without Christ in the earth, for if we have lost our saltness we are “cast out”. We are “trodden under foot of men.” The Lord Jesus is concerned, in this first application of the word ‘salt’, with our biting edge in relation to the world. Are we affecting the society in which we live? Are we infiltrating like salt into the infection to hinder society’s corruption? Is such an impact being made through our Christian living? If not, we are just going to be cast under the feet of men.

Concerning the recent publication of yet another book advocating a new, anaemic version of Christianity, certain non-Christians commented that if this is all that Christianity is, then it is about time that Christians gave the whole business up. They are throwing Christianity, as it were, under their feet, because it is such a world-accommodating, non-cutting, insipid affair, so watered down, that it has virtually nothing to say to a corrupting

society.

Are we salt that has lost its savour? The Lord Jesus says in verses 11 and 12 of this chapter: ‘Happy are ye if men revile you and persecute you’, but the Church is not being persecuted in Western Europe. Men think so little of us that they say: ‘Let us just walk over the top of them and ignore them’; and when the Church of Jesus Christ is being ignored in the world it is because the salt has gone. Otherwise there would be an antagonism. The Lord Jesus says so.

Are we looking round with superior, patronising smiles at the decadence of our society, saying how very soon the end time must be, and this is really about as much as we can expect? Rather we should see it as an indictment upon our Christian living, that the salt has gone and we are not hindering the corruption about us.

Men did not treat the early Church like this. They persecuted it, and tried to destroy it; but when we are so thoroughly ignored that we are hardly worth considering, then we are no longer the salt of the *earth*. Yet the earth has no other salt than the Church of Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus did not say that we could find the salt elsewhere. The only hindrance to mankind’s final rundown in energy, moral and ethical, and in dignity and ability is the Church of Jesus Christ—and that is you and I. We are called into this great calling.

THE PEACE OF GOD’S HOUSE

In Mark’s Gospel, chapter ix., the emphasis upon the salt is different. The disciples had been arguing about who was the greatest—and it is a very important thing to some in the Church of Jesus Christ as to who is No. 1 Apostle, No. 2 Apostle, No. 3 Apostle, etc. Everyone has to be in their right order!

After the disciples’ argument, the Lord Jesus took a little child, put him in their midst and said: ‘This is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven’, and went on to explain that if we do not live in that sort of way, but go on living with our self-ambition, self-assertion and exalting of what we are, all we are going to create is war, but it will be a war amongst God’s people. John had just confessed: ‘You know, Lord, I met a man the other day, and he was casting out devils in Your name, so I said to him: “Don’t do it! You are not with us.”’ It is that sort of officialdom, superiority, feeling that we are the ‘in group’, which creates all the disturbance and antagonism in the Church. So verse 49 says: “Everyone shall be salted with fire. Salt is good, but if the salt have lost its saltness, wherewith will ye

season it? Have salt in *yourselves*, and be at peace one with another."

So the second reason for the necessity of salty Christianity is that it is the only way to preserve peace amongst God's people. By destroying that self-assertiveness whereby each of us strives for first place, we find peace with, and love for, one another. Can we apply this in our present context to-day? Do we really find a great deal of peace amongst God's people? Are we not still so concerned about arguing our pet point as to who is the first and who understands things the best, and everyone else is less than we are? We have such a great understanding, we are really the 'in crowd', we have the true appointment of God, and that man has not. And so there are divisions. We argue, we divide, and then some of us try to join together by signing bits of paper and dismissing our doctrines—but that is not the way to solve the problem. The way is to get the salt of fire, the burning of the Holy Ghost. We need salt if we are going to live together in the peace of God's House, and we cannot do without it.

VALUE TO GOD

In Luke's Gospel, chapter xiv., the emphasis is again slightly different, for the Lord Jesus uses it in this way. He says that when salt has lost its savour it is fit neither for the land (for the Jews used it as a fertilizer to stimulate the fruit of the earth), nor is it fit for the dunghill (for they also used it as an antiseptic to put on the rubbish heap to save it from contaminating). Here the Lord Jesus is saying: 'If you have not got salt in your life, then you are going to find that you are not bringing forth My purposes. You are too unhealthy to be My disciple.' Three times in this chapter the Lord Jesus says: 'Ye cannot be My disciple', and a man cannot be a disciple of Christ without salt. Without salt we are not contributing to the fruitfulness of the eternal purposes of God for humanity.

So this tang for Christian living has reference to the *world* ("Ye are the salt of the earth"); it has reference to the *Church* ("Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace one with another"); and it has reference to God for His satisfaction, and the fulfilment of His eternal purpose for man ("You cannot be My disciple . . . You cannot follow Me . . . Unless there is salt you will have lost out.") The Lord Jesus goes on to tell the stories of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son. In this way He begins to explain what it means to have lost our savour. It is to be lost to the heart of God, and to His purpose. We can be Christians, and yet lose our salt.

WHAT ARE 'SALTY' CHRISTIANS?

How are we going to salt the earth? In the third verse of Matthew v. the Lord Jesus says: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for *theirs* is the kingdom of heaven." Again He says (verse 10): "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for *theirs* is the kingdom of heaven." Thus, having summed up the Christian and his blessings by saying that the Kingdom of heaven belongs to him, He continues: "Ye are the salt of the earth." It is the man who is truly heavenly-minded who begins to salt society and prevent its self-destruction. It is not the people who are falling over themselves to become earthly-minded who are going to preserve the earth from its corruption, but men and women who know how to live in heaven and its reign. These give savour to the insipid, boring life of humanity without Christ!

I wonder sometimes if I ought not to live in heaven as well as my little son does! There was one occasion when we were staying in a friend's home, and in one room they had a lovely orange carpet. We dropped a bottle of ink on it, and tried everything we could think of to get the ink out of the carpet, but to no avail. My wife went to the iron-monger, and he recommended something. We came back with it, and the first thing my little boy did was to drop on to his knees to look at the spot on the carpet, and say: 'Dear Lord Jesus, please help us to get this spot out!' Then he grabbed the bottle which, fortunately, was not undone, poured something which did not come out on to his piece of rag, and began to rub the spot ("faith without works is dead!"). Of course, the spot did come out! Two days ago he was due to go to a party, but the little girl was ill, so there was no party. That night my little boy prayed, perhaps not altogether from altruistic motives: 'Dear Lord Jesus, help Lucy to be better to-morrow so that we can have the party', and then he added as an afterthought: 'and help her Mummy to see that she is better!' Of course, the mother appeared on the doorstep the next morning to say the party was that afternoon!

Seriously, that is what moving in heaven means. It is taking heaven seriously. It is there, all round about us. God is there. Our Father is in heaven, and as we take Him seriously things happen. The earth is affected and we become the sort of men and women about whom, as we move in society, people recognize another dimension. Perhaps it will take a practical outworking. It may be that we shall be those who went to the Aucas from an Illinois college, and were martyred on an Auca beach by head-hunters. It may be that, as others did from

that same college, we shall go into a Chicago Rehabilitation Scheme, whereby Christians have begun to make some mark in the middle of that great city on its crime and sin. Or perhaps as a British business man who finds that with his profits he can begin to build a halfway house for prisoners coming out of prison, so that they may be 'salted' to some degree. Or perhaps it may be a Literacy Campaign in the middle of Africa whereby, after Christians have taught men and women to read and write, they say: 'We learned this from Jesus', because they found Christ in the men who were teaching them.

But it may not necessarily be in some scheme, a Lord Shaftesbury or a George Muller to meet the problems of their day, or a Martin Luther King, or involvement with our social functions. It may or may not, but it must be men or women who bear heaven with them because they are living there, and the reality of the Kingdom of heaven is theirs who will be the salt of the earth. They have *got* it! There is a rule going on in their lives that comes from heaven itself. These are the men and women who are going to prevent the corruption and disease of man who is running down without God.

"Ye are the salt of the earth." Whether we see men and women turning to Christ or not does not matter so much as whether we are fulfilling Christ's assertions when He says: 'Ye are the salt of the earth. If you have lost your savour, then men will throw you out and walk over you. They will think nothing of you.' But if you are being salty, He says in verse 12: "Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." 'Happy are ye, when men revile you, persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for My name's sake.' There is an antagonism to society, but it is that very antagonism of salt getting in and biting in the situation which prevents the world running fast away from God.

LEARNING TO BE SALT AMONGST CHRISTIANS

Then we have to learn to be salt amongst each other. "Have salt in yourselves" (Mark ix. 50). We noticed earlier how this matter came up in Mark's Gospel. The disciples had been arguing amongst themselves as to who was the greatest, a little child had been taken into their midst, and the Lord Jesus had taught them in that beautiful way He has, without shaming us. He could have turned round to those disciples and said: 'Now what was it you were talking about in the road? Ah, yes, I thought so! Who is the greatest? Now, look, how

many times have I told you fellows that it is about time you realized that you do not just get to the top like that?' That is the way we would have done it. We would have given a terrific sermon so that everyone felt terribly small afterwards. But Christ does not teach in that way. He teaches us in such a delightfully artless way that we never forget, and we can feel ashamed in our own corner, and not in front of other people. On this occasion Peter was probably coughing and loosening his collar, and prickles were going up and down John's spine as Jesus took the little child and said: 'This is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven.' You know, we do not really believe it! They did not. It takes a very long time to learn that, and perhaps we shall only do so just before we go to meet Him, but it is really true, for Christ said it. That which is greatest in the Kingdom of heaven is a little child—not the great evangelist, nor the great theologian, but the one who is childlike, artlessly simple, trusting his Lord.

'Lord, how can I be saved from this continual, aggravating, self-aggrandizement, this self-assertion, this wanting to be in the No. 1 place? Lord, how can it be solved?' Well, you have to be salted with fire. Just as salt is antagonistic to corruption, so fire is destructive to pollution.

The Lord Jesus went on to speak about hurting these little ones, and how much better it would be if a millstone were put about our necks and we were cast into the midst of the sea. It is as serious as that. Our self-assertion hurts little ones such as the man who was casting out demons in the name of the Lord, when we stopped him and said: 'Brother, you are not with us.' It hurts little ones who have just put their faith out, like the centurion at the Cross who said: 'Well, that was a son of God, at least', and have not got much further than that. The Lord Jesus said that, rather than hurt, it would be better if we never did anything. It would be better to be cut right off with a millstone round our necks and be cast into the sea. It would be better to cut off our hand, he continues in Mark ix., than to be thrown into Gehenna, where the fire burns. It would be better to pluck out our eye, or cut off our own foot than to do damage, to maim or hurt another person.

'Lord Jesus, how can I love like that? I hurt my children, my wife, my brothers and sisters in Christ, and my neighbours. How can a man love without hurting?' We have to be salted with fire, and unless we learn to be salted with fire we hurt our companies of Christians.

Do you see what the fire is? Just outside Jerusalem there was the Valley of Tophet, or Gehenna,

and at one time Solomon had built there a worshipping shrine to Molech, and later child sacrifice was made by Manasseh and Ahaz. Josiah, in his reformation, decided that that valley should become the refuse pit for all the filth and rubbish of Jerusalem. So there the fires were kept burning to disinfect the rubbish that poured out of the city life. We all live in the world's city and cannot help but pour out pollution to some degree, but we can have a fire that prevents its infection, and its hurting and diseasing of other people, especially the little ones. Everyone must be salted with fire; it is not an option. The pollution must be hindered by the fire of God in our lives burning strongly to give the first place to the Lord Jesus.

'Have peace amongst yourselves by being salted with fire.' Do you know the fire of the Holy Ghost consuming and burning within, or has the fire gone out? Is there as much desire burning in your soul to-day as there was when you began the Christian experience, to say "Not I, but Christ", to ensure that *your* life is not hurting others? There is just as much need for it to-day as there was when you first began, and perhaps even more, because contacts get wider, personal involvements get stronger, and it means we hurt one another more easily. There is perhaps more need for the fire of the Spirit of God to consume that assertiveness in our lives than ever there was.

Look at John in this story. As soon as the Lord Jesus took the little child and put him in the midst, and said: 'This is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven', John did not immediately jump up and say: 'Well, Lord, I think I was quite right in telling that fellow not to preach and cast out demons!' In effect he confesses and says: 'Well, Lord, I am sorry. I got it all wrong really.' It is the man or woman who is confessing what God shows in his life that finds the fire of the Spirit consuming it. If we are not praying, then there will be no heaven about us. If we are not being honest about the things that pour into our experience, and confessing them to the Lord, they will not be consumed by the Holy Ghost, the fire of the Spirit will seem to burn very low, and there will be no salting. We shall lose our salt, for the salt and the fire are the same thing. The fire of the Holy Ghost burns in our experience on confession—not unhealthy, introspective confession—but a glad confession: 'Lord, I have made that mistake again! Lord, I have done that wrong again, and I have seen that it has hurt somebody. Please, Lord, help me not to hurt again.' And the fire of God's Spirit begins to burn. We cease to be clods.

If we all lived like this we would all be at peace.

It would be like a glass of water, when every little molecule tries to get to the bottom—it is quite calm. But when you start to heat it up all the little molecules want to jump out of the glass. Everybody is trying to be on top and there is a lot of disturbance. "Have salt in yourselves" so that God's work can be done instead of our spending half our time fighting one another. Does not the world despise us, with our bickerings and bitings? Does it not count us as nothing because of such things? "Have salt in your selves, and be at peace one with another."

THE SALT OF LOVE

There is a salt which is for God, and we find this in Luke's Gospel. There was a whole mass of people who had been following the Lord Jesus in a rather dilettantish sort of fashion, but they were not really committed. He turned on that crowd and said: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke xiv. 26). You will know, of course, how the Hebrews used the 'hate' and 'love' similes, but in Matthew's Gospel it is put more simply for Westerners to understand: "He that loveth father and mother *more than me* . . ." (x. 37). 'Lord, is that possible? Is that what it is going to mean for me to be for You, to have a tang in my life which is to Your taste, which delights You when You taste Your children so that You just love to taste them the more? If I have to give You that sort of love, Lord, I just cannot do it.' But Jesus says: 'Unless you do, you cannot be My disciple.' Can you do it? I remember a moment in my life when I said to God: 'I cannot love You more than my wife. Lord, it is impossible.' And then your children—can you do it? I thought I could when I first began the Christian experience. I did not love anyone enough, so I could easily love God more than them; for it is those who do not love anyone who find it such an easy thing to say: 'Oh, of course I love the Lord most of all.' But as time goes on I find I cannot.

But I can tell the Lord so, so that is why the first statement in verse 27 is: "Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." 'Lord, I cannot die for You, so I do not love You more than anyone else; but I can at least pick up that cross.' You know what that meant in Roman days: you were going out to be executed. I cannot execute myself and say: 'Lord, I love You more than anyone else. I will die for You!', as Peter said at the Last Supper and could not do it

either. But I can take my cross, and Peter was trying to do that. He was saying: 'Lord, I will try to bear my cross. I have got hold of it and I am going to come after You.' "Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."

'Now,' says the Lord Jesus, 'if you are going to be for Me, and if you are going to build My purposes, count the cost, for any man who builds a tower has to see whether he has enough to finish it; and any man going out to war to defeat the satanic powers of evil must see whether he has the armies. When you decide you have not enough to build the tower, then don't start; and when you decide you have not enough men to defeat the army, send out messengers of peace.' So Christ sums up these parables with the words: "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."

Forsake your resources to build the tower, forsake your resources to defeat the enemy, take up your cross, acknowledging: 'I cannot do it, Lord. I cannot be for You; I cannot bring satisfaction and taste to Your heart, but I am coming after You', and the Lord will say: 'All right, I will look after the salt', because He is our resources. He is our salt, and that is how God gets a taste out of our lives. It is by Christ in us who, bit by bit, begins to wean our hearts so that in the moment of the crunch God does come first in our relationships. When the time comes, maybe for martyrdom, we think we cannot go that way, but in the crisis the Lord is there. It can be accomplished.

It is the Lord Jesus who is the salt which gives a taste in man for God, when we are prepared to forsake all that we have and say: 'Lord, I cannot do it.' It is just by coming to Him in worship and thankfulness, thanking Him that, though I cannot, He can. It is a life of thankfulness, for when we are thanking Him we are saying: 'I could not do that myself. You have done it for me.' We are sour in our lives because we are not thankful to God—and the first sin of Romans i. was "and they became unthankful." Not that they became proud, nor adulterers, nor murderers, but they became *unthankful*—and that is where it all begins. It is the thanking, praising, worshipping Christian that is no longer losing his savour, because, like the prodigal, he has found his Father again. He has come back to his Father's house, he has brought salt back to the table, so there is feasting, dancing and music.

Have we lost our tang? If so, we are no good to man, nor to the Church, nor to Christ. We are 'good for nothings', not fit, clods. But the savour of Christianity is preserved by men who live in heaven by prayer and find that Kingdom at work, men who are exposed to their failures and are prepared to confess them. The Spirit burns in hearts like that. There is fuel for the flame of God. It is preserved by men who learn how to give themselves to worship, to live in that 'foundness'—'I have been found of God. He is there and I have all the resources needful to satisfy His heart and to fulfil His purposes in Christ.'

R. T. F.

THE BATTLE FOR LIFE

CHAPTER II

THE CONTROVERSY OF ZION

Reading: Hebrews xii. 22; Isaiah xxxiv. 8.

"Ye are come to Zion."

"For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, the year of recompence in the controversy of Zion."

WHAT is the controversy of Zion? It is nothing other than the controversy for the life of Zion. Zion is often represented in the Old Testament as Jehovah's bride, as the one betrothed to Him, to

whom He was married. We are familiar with such a phrase as "the virgin daughter of Jerusalem." The history of Zion was a chequered history. Zion was constantly in the realm of dispute, the object of the envy, covetousness, antagonism of the nations, and all the nations were found at one time or another in some kind of relationship with Zion. The history of Zion is a very significant and suggestive history from a spiritual standpoint. The controversy, then, was God's controversy with the

nations for Zion's life. The prophecy of Isaiah makes that very clear. God was taking up the cause of Zion, of Zion's very life, and entering into a terrible controversy with the nations on this matter.

Let us bear that in mind as we take up the New Testament and consider the spiritual interpretation. In the Book of the Revelation we find the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, adorned as a bride, and the angel taking the Apostle and saying to him: "Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb" (Revelation xxi. 9). The Apostle goes on to say: "And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God." The closing chapter of the Revelation brings us into the city, and the central thing therein is the tree of life, while down its centre flows the river of the water of life; and then, as this fulness is viewed, the Spirit and the bride say: "Come." Do you see the spiritual follow-through? Here the controversy for the life of the spiritual Zion is at an end, and life—full, triumphant, effulgent—is the characteristic. Throughout the book of Revelation, God is dealing with the nations, and at its close all nations are seen as having been brought under the judgment of His Son, the controversy of Zion has been settled once for all, and Zion is found at last triumphing in fulness of life.

We have said enough to establish the fact that the controversy is in relation to life, and it is that with which we are concerned at this time. There is a spiritual sense in which we are in God's controversy for Zion to-day. If we take the sixth chapter of the letter to the Ephesians as representing what is going on in the spiritual realm, namely, a conflict with world rulers, then the rest of that letter makes it perfectly clear that the controversy with the world rulers is concerning the Church: concerning the very life of the Church, the life of the elect. We are, then, in the controversy, and the issue is no other, and no less, than the issue of life.

In our earlier meditation, in considering the messages of the Lord to the seven churches in Asia, we were seeing that the thing which occupies the place of pre-eminent importance and value to the Lord Himself is the testimony of life—not tradition, for they had that; not so much Christian work and activity, for they were there; not so many good and commendable things, praiseworthy even in the sight of God, for they were there—but that which is central and basic to the Divine election, choice and apprehension is the testimony of life. In the first chapter of the book the Lord is presented as the One who is living, who became

dead, but is alive unto the ages of the ages, and has the keys of death and Hades. Alive now from the dead, He is seen standing in the midst of the lampstands, the vessels of testimony, and judging them according to what He is as the Living One, as the One who has conquered death. What He discovers and reveals in those churches is the measure in which that testimony to Him has been lost. This is more to Him than what is found amongst them of interest, concern, activity, for Him and for His things. He shows the things which have struck a blow at that testimony, and names them; the things, that is to say, which have interfered with the full expression of Himself as the Living One. So it is disclosed that what to Him is more precious than anything else, than all other things put together, is the spiritual-life, in fulness, in power, in expression, in impact, in testimony.

THE LORD'S JEALOUSY OVER LIFE

The priority and primacy of life is referred to in a fragment of Scripture in a much-overlooked little New Testament letter—Titus i. 2: "The hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before times eternal". ("Before the world or the ages began"—Amplified New Testament.)

I want to carry that thought 'from before times eternal' into the Old Testament, to see how jealous the Lord is over life, and what is His relationship thereto.

I. THE TREE OF LIFE

It is necessary to go right back to the beginning of the Book, where you will find that immediately there has been that initial disobedience by which sin and death have entered and man has fallen out of his position in relationship to God, and out of his state as created by God, the question of the tree of life arises. Following the judgment upon the serpent, and upon the man and the earth, God takes His step of precaution in relation to the tree of life. He proceeds to safeguard it, lest this man should put forth his hand and take of the tree of life and live for ever. God set His cherubim to keep the way to it with the flaming sword which turned in every direction, so that the tree of life should not be approached.

The interpretation of that is to be found in the last chapter of the Bible. The tree of life in the midst of the city of God is something from which all sin and sinfulness is excluded. Without are seen to be all those who represent fallen Adam, sinful nature. No one can eventually be found in the presence of

God, in a living relationship with God, and no one can know eternal life unless the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus has been made effectual in them. The point is that, right at the beginning, God took a step to protect life from the touch and the appropriation of sinful man. God was not going to have a sinful state perpetuated indefinitely. The last chapter of the Bible sets its seal to the fact and shows that the sinful state is fully and finally dealt with. The state perpetuated is a state in fulness of life, by reason of what the Lamb has wrought through the shedding of His blood, even as the book of the Revelation makes clear. If at the commencement of the book we can say: "Unto him that loved us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood . . ."; then at the end of the book we can be found within the city, drinking of the water of life freely, and living in the full power of that life. Thus we see right at the beginning God's jealous attitude and action in relation to life. It is precious to note that He suspends the possession of it until the mighty work of the Cross has dealt with all that state which, if perpetuated, would be but the perpetuation of a lost world, of a world outside of the Divine intention.

II. CAIN AND ABEL

The next step in the unveiling of God's attitude toward life is seen in His dealings with Cain. When Cain has slain his brother Abel, God instantly appears on the scene. There is no delay; it is as though God hastens to the situation. Here is something which concerns Him pre-eminently. No sooner has Cain shed the blood of his brother, and that warm blood trickled into the sand, than God is on the scene. "Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: am I my brother's keeper? And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground" (Genesis iv. 9 - 10). Then see what God has to say to Cain. He is cursed. He is marked. Everybody who shall observe him shall see him as scarred by God, and branded: and he, hardened as he may have been, and insolent to God, has to humble himself and say: "My punishment is greater than I can bear." That is God's attitude toward life—His jealousy over it.

III. NOAH

We pass to Noah. The terms of the covenant with Noah are familiar to us, the equalizing of things in that covenant, and the terrible warning to man:

"Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed . . ." (Genesis ix. 6). God will keep things even. No man shall get an advantage in this matter. No man who touches that thing which is precious to God shall come by any gain. God will bring it to evenness. He will equalize in the realm of life. You rob man of that and you shall be robbed; you shall not be the gainer. That is a solemn warning and shows to man what is God's attitude toward life.

IV. ENOCH

There is a great disclosure in the Old Testament of God's mind for man in this matter. God's thought is life, not death. God is against death and for life. We glance back a step and see Enoch, who breaks the long story of death: "And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him" (Genesis v. 24). That is an offset to the course of fallen man, showing what God's thought is when a man comes into real fellowship with Himself. It is life, not death, and that was ever God's thought. It remains God's thought, and He is going to have it fully and gloriously expressed in a company of His own believing children, who will be translated to His presence, even as Enoch was, and will not see death or the grave.

V. ABRAHAM AND ISAAC

In Abraham and Isaac it is further set forth that when God has a great purpose in mind, when He is moving out on that basis, He must have things brought on to the ground where death cannot touch His purpose. Isaac is the one in whom the purpose of God is bound up, and therefore for the sake of the purpose Isaac must be put typically beyond the power of death. He must come into death to have death destroyed, that God's purpose might be realized upon a ground where death is not future, but past. That is the great illustration of Divine purpose being upon the ground of deathless life. And in the greater Isaac the purposes of God are all going to be realized, without any fear whatever of death breaking in to interrupt, because in Christ death is past and not future.

All these are vivid, strong, and, in most cases, agonized expressions of God's attitude to the matter of life. It is a very costly thing. It was infinitely costly to God. It cost those who were in fellowship with God much also. All this is the controversy of Zion in principle—God's jealousy in the matter of life.

VI. JOB

We pass on, so far as the arrangement of the record is concerned, and come to Job; and here Satan is found in the heavenlies with access to God. God challenges him: "Hast thou considered my servant Job? for there is none like him in the earth . . ." (Job ii. 3). Satan sneers back at God: "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will renounce thee to thy face." Do you see how the question of life is bound up in that challenge, and what subtlety there is in the whole movement? God gives Satan permission to touch Job; to touch his body, to touch his family, his property, everything that he has, but says: ". . . only spare his life." Here again is God's jealousy for life. Satan gets to work, and the subtlety is this: that Satan presses, and presses, and presses along every line, by every means, seeking to touch Job's life indirectly, because he cannot touch it directly. Satan's indirect method is to move Job to break with God by cursing Him, so that his life is forfeited and destroyed.* To understand the book of Job we have to recognise that it is a controversy for life. We have said it is a controversy over faith, but that is a relative factor. The real controversy is over life. We shall see the faith element at some subsequent time, but here God's jealousy for life is seen. Job is brought to great straits, but the life link is never broken, and the end is life triumphant. We see fulness, victory, everything that speaks of life at the end.

We sometimes come very near to collapse under the strain, under the trial, under the tension. When the enemy is pressing to quench our spiritual life through body, through mind, through circumstance, we are often brought very low, as was Job. We have our questionings, we get despondent, we may well-nigh despair. Yes, every heart knows its own story of how far it goes into gloom even about God, His wisdom, His love, His faithfulness. But because God is jealous for the life, and is the Custodian of the life (we are not talking about the natural, physical life), the issue is always more than we had before. We always emerge with increase. In a lesser way it is Revelation xxii. after every conflict.

We must remember that in all that we are saying there is a factor extra to the natural, physical life. The real battle is in the realm of man's spiritual relationship with God.

* The suggestion of Job's wife may have been that he should break with God, and then take his own life.

VII. THE EXODUS

We think of the story of Israel and the emancipation from Egypt, and once again everything is centred in the issue of life and death. God heads it right up to the main, the final, issue of life and death. God, moreover, takes His own way, makes His own provision, so that when death is to be abroad in the land, smiting, smiting, smiting, devastating everywhere, His own people shall be immune from death, and shall be in life because of the blood. The life of His own is taken into His own custody, and if the life of His own necessitates the smiting of a nation, grim as that necessity may be, He will follow it out. God stands at nothing when the life of His people is at stake. His jealousy over life is made very clear in all these things.

VIII. LEVITICAL LAW OF LIFE

I hardly need bring to your remembrance those passages of Scripture, in Leviticus for example, concerning God's attitude towards life, and the emphasis laid upon the necessity for the people to avoid drinking the blood, because the blood is the life and the life is in the blood—"Whosoever it be that eateth any blood, that soul shall be cut off from his people" (Leviticus vii. 27). Here is God preserving the life. Life is sacred to *Him*. Life is *His*. Man must not appropriate it for himself. Man must not take it and make it his. Life is God's and must ever be regarded as sacred unto God. It means a good deal more than that, of course, but we simply state what is apposite to our present consideration.

All these things, when summed up, bring us primarily to this: that life is sacred to God, and He is intensely jealous over it. Then, that life and not death is God's will. Again, sin and death always go together, just as righteousness and life go together. The Old Testament is an earthly type of heavenly truth, and all this is throwing its light forward and saying that what is represented there in those Old Testament Scriptures as to God's attitude toward life—there primarily represented by man's earthly, soul-life—is but figurative, typical, a foreshadowing of that dispensation to come, in which eternal life, Divine life, would be the life given to man.

A LIFE THAT IS ETERNAL

Thus when we come over into the new dispensation, we find that it is not merely the soul-life of man, the bodily life, the life of man as here on the earth which is in view, but it is another life, called eternal life. "I came that they may have life, and

may have it abundantly" (John x. 10). It is over this life that God is represented as being so jealous. It is this life which is pre-eminent in God's thought. The Old Testament, as we have said, is the earthly type or representation of heavenly truth. If it were only a matter of physical death, that is, if the question at issue were but that of the termination of life physically, and that were the end and all that mattered, I do not know that such a great deal of ado might be made about it. But the emphasis in the Old Testament upon even that takes its force from the fact that it is pointing to something else, is typical of something else and is illustrative of another life.

We are not in the New Testament very long before it is apparent that the controversy has been taken into another realm, and is now seen to be over man's spiritual life, over eternal life. That controversy is waged on a twofold issue: firstly, as to whether man shall become possessed of that life or not; and secondly, as to whether that life, once possessed, shall be allowed its full opportunity of final expression in man, or shall not rather be smothered and thwarted, baffled and hindered. That is the controversy. It is still over life, but now we have come into the reality as out from the shadows and the types.

THE PERSISTENT ASSAULT UPON LIFE

So we pass for a few moments to see, in the realm of the reality, the assault of death upon that which is of God.

The Lord Jesus. Let us pass right on at once to the New Testament, and come to our Lord Jesus, for He gathers all up in Himself. He is the last Adam. He is the greater Abel. All these Old Testament types are gathered up in Him. But remember that at His very birth there was launched an awful design of death. The intention of the devil was to destroy Him at His birth.

We have to pass over many years wherein we have no record of the things that touched His life, and then we find Him in the wilderness; and the explanation of those temptations in the wilderness is that they were an assault upon His life. Though from various points, by various subtleties, the issue was one: they were intended to break His union with the Father and get Him out into a realm where He could be smitten. You have only to see that *even He*, had He cast Himself from the pinnacle of the temple contrary to the will of His Father or, as the enemy would have it viewed, by way of testing God—putting God to the test instead of believing Him—would not have been

safeguarded by the angels of whom the devil spoke when he quoted the Scriptures. Angels have no commission to bear in their arms any man or woman who presumptuously tries to test God when called to believe Him. The Lord Jesus in His own life has shown us this. It was a threefold assault upon His life, which was dependent upon unquestioning obedience to His Father.

From the wilderness He went to Nazareth where, in the synagogue, He opened the Scriptures. The outcome was that they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city stood, to cast Him over. A little later the Jews took up stones to stone Him, and He asked them: "Why seek ye to kill me?" (John vii. 19). What is connected with such a question? "Ye are of your father the devil . . ."; "He was a murderer from the beginning . . ." (John viii. 44). The Lord Jesus uncovers what lies behind. He sees something more than man's opposition and antagonism. He sees the devil as the murderer, and set against His life.

We follow Him on to the lake, where the storm is beaten up, until those who were most familiar with those storms feared for their very lives. Being awakened by them, He arose, and in words identical with those which He used in casting out demons He rebuked the wind, saying unto the sea: "Peace! be muzzled!" and the storm subsided, showing that behind it there were other forces trying to swallow Him up.

Then we follow Him on into the garden and to the Cross. Who shall know of the death conflict in the darkness? It is all the assault of death upon what is of God.

The Church. The same thing is carried on into the Church. It is not long before Stephen is stoned, and James is killed. Peter is taken with the same object, but marvellously delivered because God had yet something to do through him. Paul was in deaths oft, despairing sometimes of life. It is a battle with the power of death. There are the sweeping persecutions in which literally tens of thousands of Christians are called upon to lay down their lives for the testimony, and "count not their lives dear unto the death". It goes on still. We are in that succession, not all of us perhaps of outward persecution, but do we not know something of the pressing of that spirit of death? We do!

All this is very true. It is the controversy of Zion. It is the battle for the life of the Lord's people. May the Lord bring home to our hearts the nature of the conflict in which we are found! We have perhaps painted a dark picture, have brought the gloomy aspect into view, and have been rather strong and severe, but if you are not able at the moment

through your own experience to enter into what we are saying, you may come to do so if you are going on with the Lord. In some real way you will enter into this controversy of Zion. I am anxious that we should see this more clearly, and recognise it in a more definite way. We can never adequately seek the Lord in relation to it and come into line with His intention to overcome it, be to Him the instrument against it which He requires and desires that we should be, until we are fully alive to what the issue is. I wonder if the Lord's people are at times really alive to the issue, and whether their prayers are always a true index of their apprehension of this thing! I believe that if you and I were adequately impressed, and fully alive to the tremendous issue, we could never pray mere prayers. We could never allow words to run out of our mouths, which is what we call praying. We should be down on our faces in a tremendous conflict on God's side against the evil menace that is seeking to devour the life of God's people; but we shall never pray like that unless we are really alive to what the issue is.

While we may know it in a doctrinal way, it is necessary for us to wake up to what is happening, and to what this means. The explanation of many a heaviness and of many a difficult experience is not simply that we have had a meal that does not agree with us, or that we are none too well and therefore not able to pray as we would wish. No, it is not just some physical malady from which we are suffering. This is not something which can be explained along any ordinary line of nature. Behind these things there so often lies another power. We may feel ill in body for no justifiable reason, from the natural standpoint. Our very energies and vitalities, physical and mental, may be sapped, and we say that we are tired, but there is something extra to that. The enemy delights in our accounting

for these things on human grounds, when we ought to be waking up to the fact that there is a much bigger issue at stake. Let us ask: what is its tendency, and what is its effect? Is it to destroy our prayer life? Does it work in the direction of bringing us into a state of weakness and uselessness to God? If so, are we going to accept that? That is the question. There is a good deal that seems to be perfectly natural which should not be accepted by the Lord's people, and we need to test everything, try it out, and see whether, after all, the whole thing is natural, or whether there is not something hidden. Do not look for a devil with horns and a tail and a pitchfork! He hides himself. He covers his tracks. He comes in such an intangible way that you are often inclined to explain the whole trouble as quite a natural thing, when it is all covering up something else, and its effect is simply to put you out of spiritual action. We have to wake up to what is the issue for the Lord's people to-day, and it is no less an issue than that of life and death.

Do you recognise what is actually happening? The enemy does not mind how many so-called churches there are, how much preaching there is, or how much religious worship. I do not know that he minds very much how much orthodoxy there is, or how much of what we would call sound doctrine. What he is against is life. In multitudes of places, so far as the preaching is concerned, and so far as the things said are concerned, no fault can be found, but there is no sense of any vitalizing. There is no energizing, no impact, and no moving of the people to register the testimony of the risen Lord against the forces of evil. The enemy is getting them all quietly, nicely, snugly into spiritual death.

Oh, may the Lord move us to a new position in relation to this tremendous issue, the issue of life and death. The Lord bring it home to our hearts!

(To be continued)

GOD'S NEW ISRAEL

V. THE GREAT INHERITANCE

"And now I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you the inheritance among all them that are sanctified" (Acts xx. 32).

"... to open their eyes, that they may turn from

darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me" (Acts xxvi. 18).

"... giving thanks unto the Father, who made us

meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Colossians i. 12).

"... knowing that from the Lord ye shall receive the recompense of the inheritance" (Colossians iii. 24).

"And for this cause he is the mediator of a new covenant, that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance" (Hebrews ix. 15).

"... unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (I Peter i. 4).

THE greatest thing that is taken over from the Old Testament into the New, and from the old Israel to the new Israel, is that which is called "the inheritance". This inheritance governs everything in both the Old Testament and in the New Testament; all that is in the Old Testament and in the New Testament is governed by the inheritance. It is the inheritance that justifies and explains redemption. That was true in the redemption of Israel from Egypt, and it is true regarding the redemption of the Church from this world. All that is governed by the inheritance. Redemption was never just something in itself. The redemption of Israel out of Egypt was a mighty thing, and we have seen that it was a demonstration of the 'exceeding great' power of God; yet all that was not just to have Israel out of Egypt.

It was the inheritance that explained the tragedy of Israel, and it was a terrible tragedy! Six hundred thousand men came out of Egypt, but only two went into the inheritance. All the rest of the six hundred thousand men died in the wilderness. The New Testament makes a very great deal of that as a matter of warning to the new Israel, that is, the Church. You must read your New Testament in the light of the inheritance, for that is what governs it in all its aspects. The inheritance is the interpretation and explanation of our very existence. It is the positive factor in our very birth.

When I came to the Lord I was a young man and very enthusiastic. You know, there is a saying that "fools rush in where angels fear to tread", and I had a brother who was some years older than I was and he was not the Lord's. He was a very strong man physically and could have knocked me to the ground with one blow. In my enthusiasm I asked him about his salvation. He looked me up and down, and I felt like a grasshopper! He did not knock me down with his fists, but he knocked me

down with a word, for he said: 'I was never consulted as to whether I wanted to come into this world. I just came into this world without having any choice. Therefore, my being here is not my responsibility, and I have no intention of taking any responsibility for my life.' That knocked me down and I had no answer to it at the time. I was just a young Christian, but since then I have learned the answer. Why are we born? Why are we in this world? We are here with a great possibility in view, for there is a tremendous thing bound up with a human life. If I had known then what I know now I would have had the answer, and it would have been this: 'Do you not recognise that God has a great purpose in your being in this world? This is not a negative thing; that we just happen to be here. There is a great inheritance to be gained or lost.'

If you ever have time, go through your Bible with that word 'inheritance', especially in the New Testament, for the New Testament is the explanation of the word.

With this in view, of course, we come to the Book of Joshua, which is the book of the inheritance for the old Israel, but it is the book of the power of the Holy Spirit to realise the inheritance. Joshua himself represents the energy of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God rested upon Joshua because Moses had laid his hands upon him, and that anointing had the inheritance in view. The word of the Lord to Joshua, after the death of Moses, was: "Be strong and of a good courage: for thou shalt cause this people to inherit the land" (Joshua i. 6). By the anointing Joshua represents the energy of the Holy Spirit unto the inheritance.

Now this is a statement of fact. I am not giving you something that I have studied. I am giving you the stated facts of the Word of God, which says everywhere that there is an inheritance for the people of God which they can miss or gain. I am sounding very forceful. That is because I take things seriously, but this is a very serious matter. There is nothing more serious in the Word of God.

WHAT IS THE INHERITANCE?

If I were to begin to explain the inheritance and try to cover all that it is, this conference would be a very long one indeed. So you will excuse me, but I will just say one or two things about this inheritance.

The inheritance is the full purpose and content of redemption, and redemption is a far, far greater thing than we have ever recognised. Redemption is only the *beginning* of salvation. When we speak

about salvation we are really thinking of people coming to the Lord. We ask them if they are saved, and many Christians will say: 'I was saved so many years ago.' So salvation is just a matter of coming to the Lord Jesus, being saved from our sins and receiving the gift of eternal life. But if you look into the New Testament you will see that there are three tenses of salvation. "We were saved", which is the past tense; "we are being saved", and that is the present tense; "we shall be saved", and that is the future tense. Therefore salvation covers past, present and future. If you want to get just a little idea of salvation, look at Paul's first Letter to the Corinthians, chapter xv. At the beginning of that chapter Paul says that he is reminding the Corinthians of the *gospel* which he had preached to them, and then through that chapter he tells us of the *gospel* which he had preached and shows that that *gospel* leads right through to the eternal glory, which includes our resurrection body, and our position and condition in the eternal ages to come. He looks at the sun, then at the moon, and then at all the stars, and says that "there is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars . . . so also is the resurrection of the dead" (verses 41, 42). There is much more in that wonderful chapter, and *this* is the *gospel* which he preached. Well, that puts salvation on a very much higher level, does it not? Peter said: "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." This great inheritance is the content of redemption. The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews calls it the "so great salvation" (ii. 3). The Lord Jesus said to the first members of the new Israel: "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke xii. 32). He also said that the Kingdom of heaven shall be taken away from the old Israel and given to the new (Matthew xxi. 43). So the inheritance is the Kingdom!

What is the meaning of that word 'kingdom'? It is the sovereign reign—reigning together with Christ. He is the destined Lord of this universe, so the kingdom is not only being *with* Christ, though it will be a wonderful thing to be with Him when He comes in His kingdom, but it is more than that—it is *reigning* with Him, being members of the government of the eternal kingdom; and, more than that, being members of the Royal Family that governs.

It is impossible to describe the inheritance! These

are some of the things revealed in the Word of God. In the case of the old Israel, Moses had great difficulty in explaining the inheritance. He was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, but he had difficulty in explaining the land into which the people were going. He said that it was "a land flowing with milk and honey . . . a land of hills and valleys . . . a land which the Lord thy God careth for; the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year" (Deuteronomy xi. 9, 11, 12), and the Bible tells us that the eyes of the Lord never rest favourably upon anything that displeases Him. So, if Moses could not explain it, and Paul could not do it, I give it up! Paul tried to explain the inheritance: "Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him" (I Corinthians ii. 9). I say again, we must give it up, but let us register the impression. To be called according to the eternal purpose is a tremendous thing to gain. It is therefore a tremendous thing to lose, and that is why the Bible is all about the inheritance.

THE ESSENTIAL BASIS OF THE INHERITANCE

Now we go back to the Book of Joshua, and here we see the essential basis of the inheritance.

We recall what happened when the people were over the Jordan. I dare not stay now to speak about the crossing of the Jordan, though I may touch it again later, but there is one clause that I like very much: "When all the nation were *clean passed over Jordan*" (Joshua iv. 1). We speak of people making 'a clean breast of it', and by that we mean that there is no compromise, no reservation, nothing that they are holding on to. They have made a clean job of it, and that is what the Jordan means. You know that it is a symbol of baptism, being baptized into Christ. When I baptize anyone I always demand that there is enough water to get them right under, and I make sure that they do go under! I hold both their hands, in case they put a hand out. No, they must go under altogether, and if I did not bring them up within forty seconds, that would be the end of them! Now, I am not trying to be humorous. Paul says: "We were buried with him through baptism" (Romans vi. 4), and it says of Jordan at the time of the crossing: "Jordan overfloweth all its banks all the time of harvest" (Joshua iii. 15). It is a complete inundation, a complete burial of everything. Jordan is only a type in the Old Testament, but that type contains the New Testament spiritual principle, so Paul says: "We were buried

with him through baptism”—and if God does not raise us with Him, that is the end of us! That is the spiritual position of the people who are going into the inheritance.

Now there is this interesting thing: When the nation were clean over Jordan the Lord commanded that the whole new generation should be circumcised. While I am speaking about this, remember Paul's interpretation of circumcision: "Neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh . . . circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit" (Romans ii. 28, 29). As we said earlier, circumcision is a sign of separation unto God. It is an interesting and impressive thing that the new generation which had arisen in the wilderness had never been circumcised. The parents had neglected this command of God, and those parents had all died in the wilderness. This means that they had ignored the spiritual law of heart separation unto God, so what arises is this: there is no entering into the inheritance without a circumcised heart. The heart has to be *wholly* and *utterly* for the Lord. If that is not true, sooner or later there is going to be a tragedy in the Christian life.

THE PLACE OF THE HEIRS OF THE INHERITANCE

Do you notice what the Lord said when this nation was circumcised on this side of Jordan? He said: "This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you" (Joshua v. 9). What does that mean? Have you ever thought about that? The reproach of Egypt rolled away! When they were utterly separated in heart unto the Lord the reproach of Egypt was rolled away. Who were these people? They were the children of Israel, and 'Israel' was Jacob's other name. What does 'Israel' mean? It means 'a prince with God'. These people were therefore, by Divine decree, children of a prince with God, and, as children of a prince, they were princes. What would you think if you saw a man, who was a prince of the royal household and therefore an heir to all that that household inherited, in prison, with his clothes in rags, his food being doled out to him from time to time, never able to choose anything for himself, and without money or home of his own? What would you say? 'What a shame!' That would be a reproach to a prince, would it not? It would be a great shame upon such a person! Yet these children of a prince with God were in Egypt like that. No, princes ought never to be in a position like that! That was the reproach of Egypt, the shame of the whole situation. It is called the house of bondage, and no prince ought to be in that.

These people are now clean over Jordan, their hearts are circumcised, and now they are wholly for the Lord. The reproach and the shame of the past are rolled away.

What a glorious thing to have the reproach and shame of our past life all rolled away! Why are you not shouting 'Hallelujah'? I think it is because you are listening to the word but are not having the spirit—or perhaps I should say that you are taking the word seriously. But our rightful place, dear friends, is where all the reproach of the past is rolled away. That is the place of the heirs of the inheritance.

THE CROSS AND THE INHERITANCE

This is the deeper, and inward meaning of the Cross, because the New Testament teaches us that the Cross is the place of spiritual circumcision. All this just says one great thing: only truly crucified Christians, and only a truly crucified church can meet the enemy in the coming battle with any hope of victory. This entering into our inheritance is something which is withstood by all the principalities and powers. All these evil powers in the universe are set against one thing, that is, God having a people for Himself to whom He is going to give the Kingdom, when the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our God and His Christ. I say that all the spiritual forces are set against that. As we have seen, they will fight to keep the people from coming out to the Lord, and if they cannot do that, they will work to keep them from going on. That is the wilderness story! And if they cannot prevent them from going on, they do not give up the battle. Now you have the story of the Book of Joshua. The people are now in their new possession, and are not fighting with the world. That was in Egypt and in the wilderness. You are not now fighting with the flesh, but you have come through into the heavenly places, and the warfare is in the heavenlies. It is spiritual, against the *spiritual* hosts of wickedness. There is no hope of victory in in this realm unless we have come through the meaning of Jordan and heart circumcision.

Now I come to my last point:

THE BATTLE FOR THE INHERITANCE

The principalities and powers have the kingdom of this world in their power at present, but that power is the birthright of God's Son. That kingdom was eternally appointed for the Son of God, and for all who are with Him. Do you think the enemy

who so strongly controls this world is going to give it up easily? He will not give up one spiritual metre without a fight! Every bit of spiritual progress is resisted by the evil forces. Surely you know something of what that means! For many weeks I had a most *terrible* battle over the message for this conference. Night and day, for a long time, I was in that battle. Then some of you know what a battle it was for you to get here! And I can tell you that it has been like that for many, many years! Whenever there is something new of the Lord in view, when there is going to be some new ground taken for the Lord, when the Lord's people are going to move on into something more of Him, there is always a battle. It may be a battle in the spirit, it may be a battle in the soul, it may be a battle in the body, it may be in yourself, or it may be in other people and in other things, but no bit of spiritual ground is going to be taken easily. The enemy sees the implication of the people of God taking the inheritance; his kingdom is weakened, his reign is shortened, and his days are numbered when the people of God go on to the possession. Are you going to let him win? Are you going on? Are you going to take the kingdom? Are you

afraid? You notice that in the first two chapters of Joshua the Lord says to Joshua so often: "Be strong and of a good courage!" Why should we not be afraid and of good courage?

Go back to Joshua, and you find that it is not he who is in charge. Joshua looked "and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: . . . and he said . . . as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come" (Joshua v. 13, 14). It is the captain of the hosts of the Lord who is in charge! Joshua, as we have said, but represents the energies of the Holy Spirit, and it is in this spiritual connection that the Apostle Paul utters some of those wonderful words: "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, *according to the power that worketh in us*, unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all ages for ever and ever" (Ephesians iii. 20). We can count on the energy of the Holy Spirit! The battle may often be very fierce. The enemies may seem to be very strong, but He that is in you is greater than he that is in the world.

So our last word in this connection is: "Be strong and of a good courage!"

(Concluded)

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THE MISSION, THE MEANING AND THE MESSAGE OF JESUS CHRIST

10. IN THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

FAMILIARITY with this part of the New Testament, as it does with so many things, has resulted in the loss of the tremendous impact which it had when first written, read, and circulated. In its nature, its purpose, and its necessity there is nothing in the Bible more contemporary, and suited to Christianity's need. It has been boxed up in a doctrine, although a fundamental doctrine, and a phrase now describes it; whereas it is really an earthquake, a revolution, a cataclysm. As I have meditated with it some vivid pictures have lighted upon my mental screen.

I have seen a man named Shammah standing in a plot of ground full of lentils and, singlehanded, mowing down the Philistines with his sword until none were left to challenge him. I have seen the hordes of Philistines menacing Israel and taking cover behind the giant Goliath who, day after day, struck terror into the hearts of the men of Israel. Then the youth David resolving that this had gone on too long and too much and must come to a

settlement; which settlement he made to the discomfiture of the whole Philistine army.

Then to come to much later history in this country, I see that meeting of barons at Runnymede with King John sitting, pen in hand, at the table, with a fierce and rebellious look upon his face as the barons have decided that a long régime of injustice must cease and a new charter of equity must be signed for all time. There is no way of escape for the monarch.

These episodes and epochs fit so well into the Letter before us. A campaign of misconstruction of Christianity has been following the Apostle Paul from city to city wherever he has gone. He, the most patient and tolerant of servants of Jesus Christ, has borne long and humbly with the assaults upon himself; his character and his credentials; his integrity; but it had reached the point where the very true and right nature of Christianity itself was being changed. At this point toleration reached its limit and this New Testament

Shammah drew his sword and said: 'The day of reckoning has come. This has gone far enough.' The fire in his bones had reached white heat. Flaming words leaped from his lips: "If we, or an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel, let him be accursed; I repeat, let him be accursed." His sword clave to his hand that day and he defied to the death the uncircumcised-in-heart Judaizers of all time.

But when we have said all that, and we could say much more like it, we have yet to come to the real and positive issue in question and battle. We have to ask what really was, and is, at stake? Many related questions have to be answered, but the inclusive statement, which governs all those questions, is nothing less or other than

THE TRUE NATURE OF CHRISTIANITY

That was, and has repeatedly been, the real and true nature of the Mission, Meaning and Message of Jesus Christ. What *really* did He come for? What did His Person mean? And what actually is His message?

May I here insert a brief parenthesis? While this ministry is to *all* the Lord's people, I know that many of its readers are servants of God in positions of responsibility and influence. To them I do address this message in a particularly earnest way. My brethren, you are surely aware that there is a very serious and vicious invasion of this world by spirits of confusion. *Nothing* is escaping this. While it is true of nations and internations, it is particularly so in Christianity. From the general realm of Christendom in ever-narrowing circles to evangelical Christianity, and then still inward to the most sincere believers, and to *any* servant of God who counts for God, there is involvement in complications and perplexity almost to a paralyzing degree. New, exotic, fantastic, extreme, peculiar, odd, unbalanced, and singular movements, teachings, and practices are following rapidly upon the stage, and many dear people of God are being caught in these, only to end in disillusionment and cynicism. Bewilderment fills the air, and because of this, Christianity is growingly in disrepute. It does, therefore, become imperative that all in responsibility and who have influence shall know where they are and be committed to making clear to God's people what Christianity really is. We are here seeking to make some small contribution to such a ministry.

Coming back to our Galatian Letter, we seek to see what it has to tell us by way of answering our main question: What *is* Christianity? There

are subsidiary questions which lead to *the* answer. Is Christianity a take-over and continuation or adaptation of the Old Testament system and economy of ritual, sacramentarianism, ceremonialism, ordinances, vestments? Is Christianity the reproduction of the Old Testament system in a mystical form? That is, the keeping of the ritual and ceremonial but attributing to it a spiritual or mystical meaning, so that it can be said: 'Well, of course, it is not the thing itself, but what it implies'? This is what sacramentarians say and teach, and many evangelicals. But a virtue *is* attached to the actual means employed. Further, is Christianity an ideology, that is, a system of ideas, the result of the mental and intellectual activity of religious minds? In other words, is it a philosophy regarding God, man, human destiny, good and evil, and human conduct? Is it a system of regulations, laws, precepts, rules, technicalities, statutes, nice points? Is it another system of: 'Thou shalt', and 'thou shalt not'? Is Christianity a tradition, a *historical* succession, an inheritance or hereditary?

To all of these, and more, the Letter to the Galatians, and the whole New Testament say—or thunder—a positive and categorial 'NO!' Any one, or all of these, would make what the Apostle here calls "another gospel", and he says of such, even if (supposing such a thing might be) "an angel from heaven" should preach it, let that angel be accursed! There is no compromise here. The sword is drawn and these "Philistines" (above mentioned and defined) are to be mown down without mercy. Paul is, after all, no more vehement and implacable than was his Divine Master when confronting those who would mislead and distort the truth of God and confuse the would-be seekers after the truth.

What, then, *is the* answer? This Letter before us has rightly been called 'The Magna Carta of Christianity' and that in a brief statement of doctrine: 'Justification by Faith.' Yes, true; that is fundamental to Christianity, but we cannot stay there. With every bit of our being we believe that, but when we have said it, have we really defined that which has composed and constituted faith? Justification by faith can be theology, doctrine, creed, a wonderful concept. Look into this Letter and see what it was that led this Apostle to his position. He based everything in *his* Christianity, his salvation, his life, his ministry, his endurance, and his eternal hope, upon one thing. It is stated as basic to the Letter itself: chapter i. verse 15: "When it was the good pleasure of God, who separated me, even from my mother's womb,

and called me through his grace, to reveal his Son in me . . .” Or in another translation: “When he who had chosen me and set me apart even before I was born, and had called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son within me . . .” What, then, is the answer?

THE INWARD REVELATION OF GOD'S SON

This is a strong line running through the Letter in various connections, as indeed it does through all his writings. He says: “Christ liveth in me.” He emphasizes the change from the outward to the inward, the objective to the subjective in the matter of the Law, the covenant, the spirit of sonship, etc. Everything now emanates from the indwelling Christ by the Holy Spirit, and this is what he means by the great emphasis upon spiritual liberty. He has come into the meaning of the Lord's words: “If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed”—freed by the life and power of Christ *within*! The Spirit of sonship within makes Christianity, and nothing else does! God revealed His Son *within*. We then have to ask what Paul saw *initially* when that revelation came to him, and what was its effect?

Of course, all that we have from the pen of this Apostle was by revelation, but in this Letter there is that which was basic to all the rest. I must, however, pause for one emphasis. Paul takes pains to stress that this knowledge of God's Son which made Christianity for him was personal, direct, and independent. He says: “It was not after man. Neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through revelation of Jesus Christ” (i. 11, 12). This is true Christianity. Whatever God may use as a vessel or channel of instruction, such instrumentalities can *never* impart Christ, put Christ into us, work the miracle of giving the faculty of sight to the blind. It just has to be something done by the almighty Spirit of God so that we exclaim in wonder: ‘I see!’ Apart from that, our Christianity at best is secondhand and objective. The emphasis of the true teacher must be upon this personal knowledge of the Holy Spirit as Lord *within*. Sooner or later Christianity will be put to the ultimate test on this all-inclusive ground and issue.

We can now ask what Paul saw on the occasion to which he refers? What did he see as to God's Son? The full answer would necessitate a going back to the Damascus Road epoch; but what does this particular Letter show? The answer is summed up in one word: the Cross. His three references to the Cross in ‘Galatians’ have three connections.

“I have been crucified with Christ” (ii. 20); “They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the passions and lusts thereof” (v. 24); “But far be it from me to glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world has been crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (vi. 14).

The three relationships are: (1) The personal—“I have been crucified”. (2) The life of the dominion of the flesh—“crucified the flesh” (that is the self-life; “flesh” is self-gratification). (3) The world—“crucified to the world”. The standards, systems, and ambitions of this world.

The Cross in this threefold relationship is Christianity. We can never cease to be amazed that the man who would gladly and vehemently have hailed Jesus of Nazareth to crucifixion came to see that he was really going to be crucified *himself*; but now he is glorying in it for other reasons. No wonder he says, “called me *by his grace*”.

What is this saying to us? It is saying clearly and powerfully that *true* Christianity issues from a devastating experience of the Cross. To *see* Christ, ‘God's Son’ crucified, is to see *ourselves* transfixed and desolated. *Sooner or later* this must come to us if our Christianity is to be the expression of the indwelling Christ as crucified, risen and exalted.

The true Christian and the true Church is a crucified person and Body!

What was the effect of this ‘revealing of God's Son’ in him? It had the effect of giving Paul a new dimension and a new horizon. It was the end of one history and the inauguration of another. Formerly the Cross was an intolerable offence; later it was the power and wisdom of God. The Cross was the meeting-place of two histories: the one it closes; the other it commences. The former history has been proved false. The new begins the true. This Letter says that one Israel has come to an end, and a new ‘Israel of God’ has been born. That one Jerusalem ‘below’ is no longer the true (if ever it had been) and the “Jerusalem which is above” has taken its place. The old history was based upon a visualized new age centring in Israel's institutions, Jerusalem, the temple, the Law, the Sabbath. The new history is based upon the enmity of all that demonstrated in the Cross, now centred in a *spiritual* nation, a heavenly Jerusalem, a holy, heavenly temple, “not made with hands”, a Law of “the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus”, and a “Sabbath Rest” reserved for the new people. This is Christianity according to the New Testament, and Paul's revelation of God's Son within.

Let us now sum up.

We fully recognize that the real occasion of this

Letter was—and is—the true ground of man's right standing with God, and that that issue is here fought out conclusively. Nothing must be allowed to interfere with that!

But, when we have acknowledged that, we have not settled every relevant element of conflict. Why is it that, when evangelical Christianity has rooted and established that doctrine in its fundamental creed and faith, so much conflict still remains in the evangelical realm? This is more or less present in early Christianity even when that basic ground is accepted. Looking more closely into the controversy in this Letter, we find that it was not only the foundation that was being settled, but what was being *put on* the foundation. All the Apostles, even Peter and James, were not quite transparent on that. (See Chapter ii. 11–14.) There was controversy among the chief Apostles, *not on the doctrine*, but as to their *innermost* position. Outwardly and doctrinally they assented, but deep down in their religious constitution a drastic “circumcision”—cutting round and between—had not as yet been consummated. There was still a carry-over of birth, upbringing, tradition, heredity, inheritance. In Paul, who had been more utterly rooted, and more vehemently absorbed in Judaism than any of them (i. 11–14), this radical severance, this spiritual surgery, had been effected. The remnants and relics of historical Judaism and natural religion on the one side, and the thorough-going emancipa-

tion—by the Cross—on the other set up a conflict, and the real cause was the threat to change the true nature of Christianity—the Gospel. It was a subtle and dangerous insinuation of mixture; the Old Testament prohibition by God of ploughing with ox and ass together, or the wearing of a mixture of wool and cotton. Paul, because the Cross had ploughed so deeply into his very being, saw through this threat to the purity of Christianity, and was roused to “the defence of the gospel”.

So we come to the age-abiding conflict, not only between Law and Grace, but the true nature of Christianity and the things which have been associated with it. People can be called Christians who have no experience of new birth, regeneration, or personal knowledge of or walk with the Lord, and there are many whose conduct, appearance, and associations are not only a denial of Christ, but a contradiction of common decency. The range is from traditional ‘Religion’ to downright worldliness, with varying shades and degrees.

So, we close by saying that the real battle is that for the true nature of Christianity. The call is for “men whose eyes have seen the King”; men who can truly say: “It pleased God to reveal his Son *in me*.” Men who will be heart-burdened for the purity of the Gospel, and who will pay the heavy price of the testimony of Jesus. It will be in ‘Christianity’ itself that they will meet the forces that make it so costly. It has always been so.

THE BATTLE FOR LIFE

CHAPTER III

THE CROSS IN RELATION TO THE ISSUE OF LIFE

Reading: Deuteronomy xxx. 11–20; Hebrews ii. 14–15; Revelation i. 18; Philippians iii. 10.

THE matter which we now have before us is the relationship of the Cross to the manifesting of life. It is very important for us to be clear as to what that relationship is. One thing is patent, and that is that life, in this Divine sense, in this spiritual sense, this life called eternal life, is only to be had as the result of the Cross of Jesus Christ. On the ground of His death and by His resurrection this

eternal life is given to them that believe. We sometimes speak of this as simple faith in the atoning work of the Lord Jesus. In the reception of that life there may be no sense of battle, nor conflict; there may be no knowledge whatever of this fuller realm where the battle for life goes on. That is because, in the matter of the gift of eternal life, the Lord Jesus Himself fought the battle in His Cross, and we receive the free gift by faith's acceptance of what He did in order that we might have the life.

That is one aspect of the Cross and the issue of life. That is to say, by the objective apprehension

of the Cross we receive eternal life. All that the Lord Jesus did for us in His Cross in order that we might pass from death unto life, appropriated, apprehended by faith, results in our having life.

But there is another side. The Cross of the Lord Jesus subjectively wrought out results in our having life more abundant. His own words are: "I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly" (John x. 10). I believe that the first half of that statement relates to the simple faith-appropriation of the objective work of the Cross—what He did *for* us—but the second part of the statement carries us further. Life more abundant requires that what He did for us shall be made good *in* us. May we put it in this way: In His Cross He dealt with our sins, and on the ground of His having so dealt with them, and of our believing in His atoning work for our sins, we receive the gift of eternal life. He also dealt with ourselves, but that is something which has to be made good *progressively*, and it is as we ourselves are dealt with in the power of the Cross that the way is made for that life to express itself in ever deepening fullness. The fact is that it is self which is in the way of the life and its full expression. It is the natural life which obstructs the course of the Divine life. Thus what has been done *for* us has to be done *in* us, and as it is done in us that life becomes more than a deposit, more than a simple, though glorious possession; it becomes a deepening, growing power, a fullness of expression.

A STATE OF DISORDER IN THE CREATION

Let us seek to set forth the position. In the first place there is in the creation a state of disorder with which God is not united. We can all grasp that. There is nothing very profound about it, except as the fact breaks upon us, and we realize that there is this state of disorder in the creation of which we are a part, and that God is not united with that state, with the creation in that condition. It is not according to His mind. It has ceased to express His thought. It is contrary to His intention and therefore He is not linked with it.

DEATH AND SATAN POSITIVELY ASSOCIATED WITH THAT STATE

Secondly, there is a positive association of death and Satan with that state. It is not just a passive mass, in confusion, in chaos, in disorder. There are active elements in it. We might say that it is a seething mass. There are forces at work in it, and those forces are not the forces of life, but of

death. Death is working, and Satan is associated with that state.

A NEED ARISES

In the third place, we see that a need arises, and a need along various lines. Firstly, there must be a *judicial setting aside of that creation*. We mean by 'a judicial setting aside' that a judgment must be passed upon it, and under that judgment it must be put away out of God's sight. It must come to the place where in its entirety it is under the Divine ban and not one part of it can come into acceptance with Him: that is, it must be judicially dealt with, and judicially set aside. That becomes necessary as a preliminary step to anything which God will do after a new order. God has dealt thus with the creation in the Cross of Christ.

Secondly, *an actual and a potential destroying of that power of death and Satan must take place*. Let us watch our words—an actual, and a potential, destroying of that power of death and Satan. Well, God did that in actuality in the Person of the Lord Jesus. He destroyed death and him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. In Christ it is actually done. Christ at God's right hand represents and declares that this has been accomplished. Death is swallowed up victoriously. Satan too has been destroyed. That word 'destroyed', translated in the Revised Version 'bring to naught', does not mean what some people take it to mean. There are times, when speaking of destroying, we think of going the whole length of utterly obliterating, putting out of existence. This word does not mean that. Bringing to naught means, in the intention of God, to render utterly abortive, to render incapable of ultimate success. Do not forget that, so far as the Lord Jesus is concerned at God's right hand, Satan is defeated. He cannot touch Him personally, and he knows it. The only way in which he can touch Him is through His members. Satan no longer has any power to touch Christ directly with death, or with any other weapon. "Through death he has destroyed him that had the power of death." It is actually done in Christ.

We have used another word—potential. That potential destroying of death and Satan was on behalf of the saints. That is something which is secured and, though not yet fully entered into in experience, can be entered into by faith and known in a progressive way. It cannot be said that you and I at present in the entirety of our being find that death and Satan have no power. So far as we are concerned it is not an actual fact that Satan is inoperative. But this has been secured for us potentially in Christ, that we may become those

who more and more experience what Christ has wrought for us, and come progressively into the good of that work which was potentially done on our behalf. In Christ, then, we see that destruction to be accomplished in actuality; in the saints, potentially.

Thirdly, it is essential that there should be a *living representation of the Divine order, which is deathless, and victorious over Satan, as the pattern to which believers are to be conformed*. That is a necessity, and it is realized in Christ. He is the representation of the new creation, the Divine order, to which we are to be conformed, and which is deathless, and victorious over Satan. God must work to an end, to a pattern, to a model, and Christ is that for Him. He is working in the saints to bring about conformity to Christ, which means also conformity to the Divine order represented by Christ; for we must remember that Christ is the sum total of a Divine order. So often the Lord's people fail to recognize that. We must in the first place, of course, recognize that He is a Person. Before all else, He is the Divine Person, but He is in Himself the sum total of a Divine and heavenly order. If the tabernacle or the temple of old expressed a whole system of things: regulated, ordered, appointed, functioning, related: a wonderful system (do not be afraid of that word, for put in the right realm it is a very good word), and if the temple or tabernacle represented that, they were but types of Christ. Christ is the Priest; Christ is the Altar; Christ is the Sacrifice; Christ is the Fine Linen; Christ is the Gold; Christ is the perfect Humanity; Christ is all, and Christ is the order. "Let everything be done decently and in order", says the Apostle. It is a heavenly planning and appointing.

When we come into Christ, while it is true that we come into the Divine Person, we have to come into our place in a Divine order, and being in Christ requires that there shall be a right relationship to one another; an appointing, a functioning, a relativity about everything. It is a wonderful Divine system. *Death and Satan have their occasion when anything that relates to Divine order is not obeyed, recognized or observed*. It is quite easy for death to get a chance amongst the Lord's people when there is a disorder amongst them, when they are not conformed to Christ in the sense of His being an expression of an ordered, heavenly system. Surely the New Testament rather thunders upon that than speaks. If the Corinthian Church is an example of weak testimony, and indeed it is, the reason is not far to seek. It was a matter of disorder amongst believers.

So God must have this representation of His Divine order, which is deathless, and victorious over Satan, and to that believers are to be conformed. That is conformity to the image of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Fourthly, there is required *a vital union with Him as basic, and a life utterly and continuously in the Holy Spirit*. We all accept the first essential, vital union with Him as basic, but what is just as important, if there is to be the full expression of life, is that there shall be a life which is altogether in the Holy Spirit continuously. Life in the Holy Spirit is the Divine offset to that other life in death and under the power of Satan. That other life is disordered, and God is not united with it.

That is the first state: a life in death, under the power of Satan, in disorder; tremendously active, energetic, and yet God is not in it. It may even be active in a religious way, and yet God is not in it. I sometimes wonder if religion is not God's greatest enemy in this world. It sounds a terrible thing to say, but I am quite sincere in raising that question. Religion seems to place more people in a position in which God—if we may so speak—is put to a greater measure of difficulty to reach them by the Holy Spirit than any other thing, because it puts them into a false position. Over against that God sets this new Order which is utterly under the Holy Spirit. What does it mean to be utterly under the government of the Holy Spirit? It means that everything shall be submitted to the Holy Spirit. You and I will recognize that if we move any way without our lives completely committed to the Holy Spirit, we are most likely to function outside of God's realm; and the end is death. There may be the best of intentions. Our motives may be all right. We may even do a thing for the Lord; but there are multitudes of things done for the Lord which are not done in the Holy Spirit. There is a whole mountain of activity proceeding from the purest motives for the Lord's interests, but they are not the Holy Spirit's activities. I believe the Lord is generous and gracious, and that, because it is a matter of ignorance, He is patient with us and seeks to lead us into better ways. The mistaken course may be due to want of light, and while fuller light is not available, or until it breaks in, the Lord continues alongside and gives as much blessing as He can. But that does not mean that in the long run all that past activity is going to meet with acceptance and prove to have been for the accomplishment of Divine ends. At some point it will break down, and those concerned will come to a recognition of the fact that, after all, a great percentage of all that work for the Lord has not

counted; and the earlier we come to that recognition the better.

THE CROSS: THE ALL-INCLUSIVE ANSWER

All that is gathered up in the Cross. The Cross simply says that an order, though it be religious, well-motivated, or good-intentioned, but nevertheless proceeding from man in his natural state (not necessarily in defiance of God or in conscious rebellion against Him, but just the expression of man's natural state as he is), the Cross says that this entire order is set aside. God has judicially judged it and put a ban upon it. In the Cross of the Lord Jesus God has said finally: 'You in your natural state cannot serve Me, and cannot bear any fruit to My glory! It is possible to go out and work, labour, and die of the strain of trying to serve Me, and yet it still remains true that you cannot, out from yourself, by any natural resources whatever, bear fruit unto Me.' The only thing that can ever get through to God's end, and that can be in life—eternal, Divine, heavenly life—is that which proceeds from the Holy Spirit.

How sweeping that is! How that analyses and dissects everything! Of the things we say, for example, it continually presents the interrogation: 'Was that spoken in the Holy Spirit?' It is not enough to ask ourselves: 'Did I mean it well? Did I intend it for the Lord?' but: 'Was it said, was it done, in the Holy Spirit, or did I do it?' It is not a question of motive or of intention, but of the source from which we did it.

We have daily to recognize that our lives must be subject to the Holy Spirit, and when we are aware that there has been something of our own will, we have to be faithful before God about it. I believe that slowly and surely we shall come to the place where we live with that certain pause in our hearts which is a check on our impulsiveness, a check on rashness, a check on acting under excitement, a check on our own way of reasoning about things. That is a thing for the Holy Spirit to set up in us. Our business is to recognize that from centre to circumference our lives must be handed over to His control. The result will be that the Holy Spirit will all the time work back to the Cross. The Cross, once for all, settled that position in a comprehensive and detailed way. It stands for ever as God's judicial ban upon man by nature, in his unregenerate state. The Holy Spirit will work back to that with us.

Do recognize that the Cross is the end of the risen life, and not only the beginning. If you forget everything else, remember that. The Cross is the

end of the risen life, as well as the beginning: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, *becoming conformed unto his death.*" People have been to me with Philippians iii and have asked: 'Why did Paul put death at the end? Surely it ought to be right the other way round—"That I may be conformed to His death, and know Him in the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings"!' No, there is no mistake. The order is of the Holy Spirit. The power of His resurrection presupposes that there has been a death, but the very resurrection-life leads to the Cross. The Holy Spirit in the power of the risen life is always leading you back to the Cross, to conformity to His death. It is the very property of life to rule out all that belongs to death. It is the very power of resurrection to bring us back to the place where death is constantly overcome. That place is none other than the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ where the natural life is put aside: So Paul says: ". . . becoming conformed unto his death . . .", which means: to have the ground of death continuously and progressively removed; and that, again, as we have said, is the fruit of living union with Him. It would be a poor look-out for you and for me were we to be conformed to His death in entirety apart from the power of resurrection in us, apart from our already knowing the life of the Lord. Where would be our hope? What is it that is the power of our survival when the Cross is made more real in our experience? There would be no survival were it not that His risen life is in us. So Paul prays: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection . . .", and that means conformity to His death without utter destruction. The end of the risen life is the Cross. The Holy Spirit is always working in relation to the Cross, in order that the power of His resurrection may be increasingly manifested in us.

This is the background of the whole question of life. I am sure, with a greater certainty today than ever, that the basis in us for life triumphant is the working of the Cross in the setting aside of all that which is natural. There is nothing more hated by the enemy than the Cross. Let us seek to free our minds from all false conceptions of the Cross! So often there has been this kind of reaction: 'Oh, it is the Cross; it is death, death, death! This working of the Cross in a subjective way is all the time leading to death!' That is why we have already mentioned that it is so important for us to recognize that it is not that death destroys us, but that it makes the way for a greater fullness of life. It is the positive side that we have to keep in mind; not the

fact that we are constantly being ruled out, and ruled out, but rather that of necessity that is being done in order that He may come in, and come in, and come in. It is the life side which has to be kept uppermost, even in the working of the Cross with reference to what was set aside by God at Calvary.

Is your need, then, that of life? The Lord, in effect, says: 'Well, let us get this thing out of the way!' And when He gets that out of the way there is life. Do you want more life? Well, let us get this thing out of the way; and you have more life. You very rarely meet people who, having really laid themselves out before God for an increase of spiritual life, have not promptly gone into a very bad experience and had a difficult time. Have you ever come to the place where you have laid yourself out for that extra thing, that new thing, which God has been revealing to you, and not gone through some dark, trying and painful time? It is always so. It is not wrong. The Lord is only saying: 'Do you

want that?' There is always something to be got out of the way. It may be that you want spiritual increase because it will make you a happier man. That motive will have to be got out of the way so that you want it, not for your own sake, but for His sake. If you go through a bad time, and the dominating element is self, you will say: 'Oh, well, it does not matter. I would rather not have it if it means this!' That is the selfish way of regarding it. But if you are in a dark time in relation to something, and you come to the place where you say: 'Well, whatever it costs, the Lord must have this thing in my life!' you have come there by way of Christ's victory. The Holy Spirit always brings that issue. It is life that He is after, and life more abundant; and this is alone realized by His bringing back and back to the Cross. The Cross is basic to life, because it was there that the Lord Jesus conquered death, and brought life forth for the saints. Calvary is victory, not defeat!

(To be continued)

ON COURSE

"That ye may put difference between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean" (Leviticus x. 10).

"Ye shall not make yourselves abominable with any creeping thing that creepeth, neither shall ye make yourselves unclean with them, that ye should be defiled thereby. For I am the Lord your God: sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that moveth upon the earth. For I am the Lord that brought you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy. This is the law of the beast, and of the fowl, and of every living creature that moveth in the waters, and of every creature that creepeth upon the earth: to make a difference between the unclean and the clean, and between the living thing that may be eaten and the living thing that may not be eaten" (Leviticus xi. 43-47).

"And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment; so that ye may prove the things that differ; that ye may be sincere and void of offence unto the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness,

which are through Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God" (Philippians i. 9-11).

LOST in space *could* have been the fate of Apollo 13. This small craft, manned by its three occupants in a completely alien environment, depended almost entirely on external forces to which it was related to bring it safely home. Here we saw a massive combination of the *knowledge* centred in 'Mission Control' and the responsive *judgment* and *actions* of those within the craft. The one supreme objective was to keep it on course, which was essential to its safe arrival home.

The drama and suspense were heightened by the possible breakdown in the transmission and receiving of a mass of detail upon which action was to be based. Contact in a number of realms, moral and electronic, was vitally essential to the course being maintained.

Herein lies an important parable for the Church today. We live in a dangerous atmosphere of dishonest enquiring: 'Why should I?' 'Why shouldn't I?' 'What does it matter?' 'Who says

this is important?', etc. For the Apollo astronauts such an attitude towards 'Mission Control', or to the importance of details—much of which they might not have understood!—would have meant a losing of the way and a consequent death in a wilderness of space.

God has provided for us against this. In Exodus *He acts*; the 'blast off' is by His power alone. He delivers His people by a mighty hand. Against the humanly insuperable, gravitational pull of Egypt they are thrust forth by His power alone. But in Leviticus—now launched—*God demands*. The onus for action shifts to the vessel—to men in an alien atmosphere destined for the place where they belong. To be kept on course means action based on an external, concentrated source of knowledge and power: 'In Him'—the Lord Jesus Christ—'are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge' (Colossians ii. 3).

It is for this reason that the Book of Leviticus, with its massive concern for detail, is vital to the purpose of God. For those who doubt its validity or relevance, we find it quoted forty times in the New Testament. It is a fount of spiritual knowledge and truth. Cowper regarded it thus:

"Israel in ancient days,
Not only had a view
Of Sinai's blaze,
But learned the Gospel too.
The types and figures were a glass
In which they saw the Saviour's face."

A powerful New Testament summary of its content and purpose is found in Philippians i. 9, concentrated in those three key words: '*knowledge*' (external detail), '*discernment*' (inward moral choice based on knowledge), '*proving the things that differ*' (putting to the test, *doing* the things judged to be right).

What, then, does Leviticus contain and mean?

(A) A MASSIVE CONCERN FOR DETAIL

Concerning the 'whole man', his spiritual worship and soul salvation: Chapters 1-4; his social behaviour and conduct: Chapter 5; his property: Chapter 6; his food: Chapter 11; his health and hygiene: Chapters 13-15; his family and progeny: Chapter 18; his security: Chapter 19; and so on, throughout the book.

(B) A DISTINCT RECOGNITION OF PRIORITIES

It begins where all relationships with God begin—with true worship. This is the governing core of

attitude and behaviour. This explains the God of the meticulous—He is altogether different from His creatures. This explains the vast amount of detailed instruction as to how He is to be approached and worshipped, which relieves man of any ground for his own imagination. All must proceed from God, and this alone is found in Christ who is the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and who alone meets all the Divine requirements. Worship or prayer which disregards the Divine detail is 'strange fire' which is as destructive as the *true fire* is effective.

(C) IT INVOLVES TREMENDOUS COST

"There is nothing cheap with God. It is always the best that He gives and seeks to receive in return. His values are supreme, be they the sheep or goats for sacrifice, or the garments of the priests! There are no 'instant', 'canned', 'quick frozen', 'dehydrated' ways with God. He gives and seeks reality. Leviticus teaches, above all else, the value which God places on all that which is related to Him and spells out for us that which is worthy of His Holiness.

(D) ALL THIS IS GIVEN AGAINST A WILDERNESS BACKGROUND

It is for the present. The details are for the desert, not the destiny! The fact that they constitute a contrast to their surroundings is evidence of their true nature and value. We are not excused from obedience here on the ground that the 'times are bad', 'all is against us', 'we cannot help it', 'this is how we are made'. Here and now is our need. Our course lies through the wilderness.

The burden and aim of this book, designed to keep God's people on course, are summarized by a number of key verses.

1. "*That he may be accepted . . .*" (i. 3).

This means unbroken contact with 'Mission Control'. The careful maintaining of sensitive lines of communication and channels of power are of the first importance. To sin wilfully or unwilfully breaks the contact, and cleansing and renewal must be sought. To walk in the light means to be on course and to prove 'co-ordination' (fellowship). What would have been the situation in that small space ship had the three men fallen out with each other? It would only require one to lose his contact with 'Mission Control' for this to happen, and the result could have been disastrous. Fellowship means access to the Father and oneness with Him on His basis. Hence the primary emphasis on

worship, and that 'together'. Thus we have the 'table', a focal point ordained of God where the tremendous fact of 'being accepted before the Lord' is powerfully demonstrated, and, alas, tragically weakened by those whose contact is broken.

2. *"That ye may put a difference between the holy and the common, the clean and the unclean"* (x. 10).

That we may discern! How do we know what is true and what is false in a day of imitation and synthetics? It is necessary for us to bow to a Superior Informer—we may not be under law, but we are under the God of law and perfect order, whose purpose is to bring us safely home. It is vital that we develop taste for what is right and true and clean. This involves *all* we see and read. It involves the friends we make and the places to which we go. If details mean anything, then all, body, soul and spirit, must be brought subject to Him, and whatsoever we do—in any area of life—must be for Him. We simply learn and must accept that we cannot do as we like.

This lack of discernment is one of the biggest single factors for deflecting a Christian off course, and we must in all honesty and sincerity say: 'Lord, where have I gone wrong?' We may be surprised by His answer—we failed to recognize the common and unclean.

3. *"To teach when it is unclean"* (xiv. 57).

Infection and the danger of contamination were not only to be found on a person, but in his dress and in his house. It is important to recognize this. The beginning may be small and undetected, but

the end result can mean a spiritual epidemic. The small root—many defiled (Hebrew xii. 15). The onus for detection and dealing lies with both the individual and the spiritual leader, and requires an acute spirit of discernment with a skilful hand at spiritual surgery. "If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one" (Galatians vi. 1). If honest detection of a 'spot' (in person, dress or house) were to result in 'our going to him alone', and following the details for disciples in Matthew xviii. 15–17, infection could be arrested and healing be secured.

The New Testament has many practical examples of the warnings of uncleanness and the removal of the unclean. We must give earnest heed!

4. *"The Glory of the Lord"* (ix. 6).

This was to be a foretaste of home! An incentive to get there—and for us it is the 'extra'! The reality of God amongst us in power. To disregard the details will disqualify for 'glory'. Yet this is to be our experience, and many know that seemingly undefinable 'difference' between meetings and meetings, and places and places. Is the God of glory there? Does His glory appear to all the people? This is the evidence and thrill of being on course. "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are through Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God" (Philippians i. 11). These are not words without meaning, unattainable, but to prove and enjoy them God has made full provision. Let us, then, obey and apprehend!

W. E. T.

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

CAUGHT IN THE ACT

MANY years ago in India there lived a Christian whom we will call Lady X. She was wealthy and entertained many British officials and other people of importance in her lovely home. She was very much liked, but most people scoffed at her devout faith and some were not slow to let her know of this and to express their own unbelief.

It so happened that she once had several of these unbelieving friends staying in her house at the same time, and on one occasion the talk got round to the Genesis story of the Fall of man, and par-

ticularly of Eve's part in being tricked by Satan into eating the forbidden fruit.

"Surely you don't believe that!" one of them remarked. "And you a woman, too! No sensible woman could possibly have acted so foolishly. I am surprised that anybody ever invented that story, and still more surprised that you believe it." The others all agreed and joined in to pour scorn on this idea of temptation and disobedience by Eve.

Lady X. said little, beyond making her own position clear, but she had an idea, and next

evening at dinner she put it into operation. Everyone had been served, but in the centre of the table there was a large silver dish which remained covered up. The hostess noticed several inquisitive looks being directed towards this covered dish, so she herself looked at it and began: "O yes—that dish——", when suddenly a servant came to her side and told her that she was urgently wanted in another room.

She rose up from her seat and asked to be excused, adding: "That dish has something really extraordinary in it, but please do not touch it until I return." With that she left the room, and of course the general conversation centred on the mysterious dish. What was in it? Various suggestions were made, but still Lady X. delayed, so nobody knew which guess was right, if any. She had hinted that she might be absent for a time and had urged them to proceed with their dinner and not wait for her.

This they did in a half-hearted sort of way, but all the time they were far more interested in what was under that silver cover than what was on their plates. One lady could bear the tension no longer, so she suggested that surely there could be no harm in lifting the lid and peeping under. She thought that they could all pretend that they did not know what was there and so give their friend the pleasure of thinking that she was surprising them.

At first her suggestion was turned down, but as Lady X. still delayed they one by one began to weaken until the first lady again urged that there could be no harm in just taking a peep. "Do lift the lid!" she begged her husband, adding that the great thing was to replace it in exactly the same position so that they could not be found out. So at last her husband did as everybody suggested, and taking hold of the silver handle he lifted the cover just enough to be able to see inside.

Now India can be very hot, and in those old days there was no such thing as air-conditioning, as there is today, but only a large fan, or punkah, which was suspended from the ceiling and went

round and round to stir up the air. The lid was lifted in silence except for the swish of this punkah, and then a cry of dismay came from the lips of all the guests.

What do you think was in that dish? A heap of feathers! The currents created by the fan sent these feathers flying all over the table. There were feathers everywhere. At first the diners instinctively tried to grab them in order to put them back again in the dish, but they soon realized that this was impossible. They had thought that they could cover up their act, but now they saw that the evidence was flying in all directions.

At that moment Lady X. returned to the dining-room and saw the predicament of her guests. She was very amused inside, but she kept a solemn face and remarked mildly: "I thought that I asked you please not to uncover that dish!" They all looked rather foolish, and then the man who had done it apologized, adding that he was afraid that the harm was done now and the feathers could not be put back.

"Oh, it is all right," Lady X. replied, "but you see my point about Eve now, don't you?" She went on to point out that if intelligent people of the nineteenth century could be overcome with curiosity, it was not surprising that the first woman failed in this way. "That is just how people do behave," she added, "and if you, why not Eve?"

They laughingly agreed that they had been caught in the act, and that perhaps there was more in that Bible story than they had realized. One or two of them appreciated that if their hostess was right about this, she might be right about more that the Bible teaches, and that perhaps instead of scoffing they should read more of it. This is, of course, what Lady X. wanted them to do; not just to take her word or imitate her faith, but to discover from the Word of God not only the fact of human sin, but the wonder of the Saviour's love. Don't argue about the Bible—read it for yourself!

H. F.

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OUR QUESTIONS AND THE LORD'S ANSWER

"But now I go unto him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou?" (John xvi. 5).

JESUS is here speaking from heaven and saying what He hears His Father say. Because He has heard His Father say it, He says: "None of you asketh me, Whither goest thou?" This is quite remarkable, because if you read John xiii. 36 you will find that Peter did ask the Lord: "Lord, where goest thou?", and if you read John xiv. 5 you will find that Thomas also asked the Lord where He was going: "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; how know we the way?" Peter and Thomas had asked the way, but, according to Jesus, they had not asked anything at all!

Jesus said of Himself: "I am from above: ye are of this world" (John viii. 23), so the questions we ask are of the earth and not in the realm of the Spirit. Therefore you very seldom find that our Lord Jesus answered the questions put to Him. Again and again in John's Gospel we see that people asked Him questions and He said something which seemingly had nothing to do with the question.

Nicodemus was one of these questioners. He put this question to the Lord: "How can a man be born again?" Had he put that question to us we would have answered: 'One, if you do this and that, and, secondly, you must do something else, and, thirdly, you must testify to people, and, then, fourthly, the Lord will give you new birth.' But the Lord Jesus did not answer Nicodemus' question! He said: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John iii. 5). Nicodemus asked further: "How can these things be?" Again if he had asked us that question, we would have answered with four more points, and said: 'And then it happens!' But the Lord did not do that. He said: 'If you do not believe when I speak of earthly things, how can you believe when I speak of heavenly things?' If you read chapter three of John's Gospel, you will have great difficulty in finding an answer to that question that you will like. That is because Nicodemus asked his questions as an earthly man, but the Lord never answers questions as an earthly man, so what He says fails to satisfy man's mind.

It was the same when the Greeks came and said:

'We would like to see Jesus.' What an answer the Lord Jesus gave them! "The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified" (John xii. 23). Is that an answer? Not to our minds!

It is always like that with the Lord. He does not answer questions. He *cannot* do so, for an answer which we would understand would be a means of keeping us in our world. It would be a hindrance to man if the Lord answered his questions according to his mind. The Lord wants to draw the earthly man out of his world, so He cannot give him an answer that he would understand, for that answer would keep him in his earthly world. The Lord knows what is in man and is not in need of his questions! We often feel that our questions are very important, but the Lord knows better. Our questions are not vital. Deep down underneath the many questions there is something that the Lord knows, and that is what is vital. It might be a hidden sin; it might be pride; it might be fear of man; it might be superficiality; or it might be some kind of bondage. Therefore the Lord does not answer questions, and it is as though we do not ask anything at all.

The Lord's answer is, of course, the word of the Cross, and the Cross does not answer the questions of earthly-minded people. It was an answer the disciples had never expected, for it did not answer their questions, but was a shock to their whole being. The Cross does not accept the earthly man and his questions, but does away with them. It is as if the Lord from the Cross says: 'You are nothing and your questions are nothing. You have never asked one question that is valid with Me!' That is the way in which the Lord answers questions, and it seems as if He does not speak at all to the earthly man.

In II Corinthians ii. 17 Paul gives a remarkable definition of preaching: "... but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ." Where is his audience? Is that not very important? You cannot find an audience here in Paul's definition of the preaching of the Cross! He speaks "in the sight of God", and not in the sight of men. That is very important, because we are so interested in applying the truth to the status of men. We are always thinking of those who ask the questions and say to them so kindly: 'I will do what I can to understand you, and if I say something that you do not understand, please ask me to explain. Do

you understand now? Can I make it clearer? Shall I write it down? Then we have all these points, one to four, and (a) and (b), and at last they understand everything—and it has not changed them a bit! All that has just been a means of keeping them where they were! Paul was much more interested in God's presence. For him it was not so much: 'Do you, my audience, understand me?' but: 'I am speaking in the sight of God. Does His Spirit give His 'Amen' to what I say?' That is the all-important thing; and the more you make things plain to the earthly man, the sooner the Spirit's 'Amen' disappears.

So the Lord said: 'None of you has asked Me whither I go.' If Peter or Thomas had interrupted and said: 'Don't you remember, Lord, that I asked you that question an hour ago?' He would have said: 'We cannot speak to one another from two different worlds. I am helping you out of your world into Mine, because all that you do and say in your own world is as nothing. I speak from above. My words are not a declaration; they are life and spirit. They go deeper than answers to your questions, Peter. Can you not, even now, sense that My word is something quite different?'

I think the Lord has graciously allowed us to have this word among us this week. Many have come with questions, and possibly they have not been answered. Or perhaps the Lord has said something so surprisingly different from your question that it is as if He spoke of something that had no relationship whatsoever to your problem. Hold on to that word very strongly! In this week the Lord has not been in need of our questions, because He knows every one of us here. I have been speaking with quite a number of you at meal-times and a question that has come up several times is this: 'How do we build the Church?' The

Lord has not answered with four points and then said: 'Now you have the Church!' I am sorry we have not had such a clear answer! Would it not be wonderful if we could go back to our different places and say: 'One . . . two . . . three . . . four . . . and then we have the Church'? If we ask the Lord: 'Lord, how do I build the Church?' He will answer thus: 'Go and visit that troublesome old saint down there!' or: 'Pray for those who persecute you!' or: 'Greet that man in the street whom you do not like!' Then we would say: 'But, Lord, that is no answer to my question. How *do* I build the Church?' To that the Lord would say: 'You ask questions from the earth, and I can never give you an answer on that level. But I will give you an answer, and if you have an ear to hear what the Spirit says, then you will recognize that this *is* the answer.' That is a creative answer, an answer with, and in, life.

The word of the Cross is the word from above, and that is like rain from heaven. It does not return to the Lord void, but it fulfils that for which He has sent it. Be sensitive to that word which we have heard this week! It may not answer our questions, but it does answer the cries that come right from our innermost being.

So anyone who came with such a cry, or—to speak in modern language—with an existential cry, knows that *only* the word from above does away with all our questions and touches our spirit. It is that word that satisfies the crying heart, and we are grateful for it. It is that word we want to keep; and it is that word, and only that word, which we want to give to our generation.

It can be done, and it shall be done!

P. M.

THE WILL OF GOD IN RELATION TO HIS PEOPLE

1. OBEDIENCE TO THE WORD OF GOD

THESSE messages and this ministry are based upon a three-fold supposition, or assumption:

1. That you have a very real concern to know the will of God.
2. That you are quite prepared to consider anything that may be a help to you in that direction.
3. That you are of a mind to obey any light that

the Lord may give as to His will.

Given that foundation, I think the Lord will find a clear way of meeting us and speaking to us.

The business of any servant of the Lord is, perhaps in many ways, to bring His people to know what is His will concerning them, and it is on the heart of this servant of the Lord, if He will

help, to give you a fuller understanding of what that good and perfect will of God is. We will come back to that more specifically as we go on.

The Bible, which is the charter of the Christian faith, is altogether occupied with that one thing. You can read through your Bible, and perhaps you will find some of it rather tedious, and other things you might not understand, but the whole Bible, altogether, is concerned with that one thing—the will of God. So it is as well to read the Bible everywhere in that relationship: What has this to do with the will of God?

GOD MOVING ACCORDING TO PURPOSE

In other words, the Bible is a revelation of God moving according to purpose. That is only another way of speaking about the will of God. God is seen, from the first words in the Bible to the last, moving according to purpose, moving *in* and *with* purpose. He is a God who is motivated by one final and all-inclusive object, which we understand in New Testament language as God's eternal purpose.

The first section of the Bible, which consists of the first five Books, shows us, clearly, fully and meticulously, God moving according to purpose. It is a section of movement forward, and although in the fifth book, the Book of Deuteronomy, there is a retrospective aspect, a looking back with this word: "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God hath led thee" (viii. 2), even that retrospective aspect has a forward aspect connected with it, for the remembering is related to what is yet to be. As you know, it is the book of people between a past history and a new history of the future, and it is looking back to pick up the lessons of the past in order to carry them into the future. So we move into the Book of Joshua with all that the past history has taught as the foundation, and how meticulous the Lord is in that book of Deuteronomy! He is reiterating and re-emphasizing, and laying a very sound and very particular foundation for the future. It is important to note that in the light of what we are going to say, for we are going to be occupied with the laws of God by which His will—which is His purpose—is realized, fulfilled and accomplished in His people. So all this first section has the future in view, with the will of God governing.

The last section of the Old Testament, the Prophets, is occupied with the tragedy of lost purpose. The cry of the Prophets is that God's will has not been realized and fulfilled. It is a tragic cry of failure and disappointment, and you

must listen to it, for as you listen to these Prophets and hear their anguished cry over these people, you are hearing just this: 'What God meant has not been realized, and that is a terrible thing!' The Prophets have a voice of tragedy, pathos and anguish, because God has been disappointed over His purpose in these people, and they have missed what He intended for them.

So we have the first and last sections of the Old Testament. We are not here occupied with the whole of the Old Testament, but just notice these in connection with the will of God. Of course, I am talking about the big, comprehensive will of God, not about what we might call the little wills of God with which we are occupied every day, when we say: 'What is the Lord's will for me in this, or that?' No, that is not what I am talking about but, mark you, all those expressions of the Divine will in the particular matters and situations are gathered into the big will, and until you get into that big will, you really do not have the ground for the little wills of God, the particular application of that will.

Turn over to the New Testament, and in the first section God is taking up His purpose again. Now He is taking it up in the Person of His Son, and in Him the purpose and will of God is embodied and personified. Now it is all gathered into a *Person*. It has been expressed, as the writer of the Hebrew Letter says, in many different ways and "by divers portions" at different times. Now the whole thing is summed up in the Person of Jesus Christ, who says: "I am come . . . to do thy will, O God" (Hebrews x. 7). This whole will and purpose of God, therefore, is personified, or incarnated, in Jesus Christ, God's Son; and although you have heard that a thousand times and have listened to many, many messages about it, it may not have occurred to you that there is one statement by the Lord Jesus which comprehends all this: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (John xiv. 6). That is a comprehensive statement as to the whole will of God.

"I AM THE WAY"

What do you have a way for? To get somewhere! A way implies a goal, a moving toward an object. 'I am the way of this eternal purpose of God. I am the way of its realization. I am the way, the embodiment of the will of God.' "I am come to do thy will, O my God." The way is a Person.

"I AM THE TRUTH"

That simple clause, or definition, is so immense

that it needs many hours! Men have been preaching on it for centuries. In effect the Lord Jesus is saying: 'I am set in a realm which has been deceived and led away from the will of God, from the Divine purpose. I am in a world that is now a lie in its constitution. I am the truth over against all that which is false in the human race, in the creation, in this universe.' If the will of God is all-comprehending, vast, and great, the lie of the devil is an immense thing, and it is something that has to be overcome in you, in me, and in the whole race. Truth has to be put into our constitution to destroy the lie that is there.

I dare not dwell upon that, but just indicate it in the connection with which we are concerned—the will of God. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John viii. 32). We talk about 'conversion', and, you know, a fundamental factor in conversion, in turning round in the opposite way, is turning from what is false to what is true, coming *into* the truth of God, as to why we have a being in His purpose, why He is dealing with us as He is according to His great will, and what it all means. Do you and I not need every day to know the good of that conversion, the real and true meaning of God in Christ for us?

"I AM THE LIFE"

We have far too small an idea of that! There is a marvellous statement in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians, where he speaks of the life which God foreordained unto His glory. Before ever the world was created and man upon it, God's thought was centred in this thing called 'life'. It was in His eternal counsels. That is the battleground of the ages, and is the key to so much—what God means by life, the life of God's eternal purpose, the life of His all-captivating will, the life which the Lord Jesus is.

This is the day which is called 'Good Friday' and we were reading this morning of the Lord Jesus, having received the sentence of crucifixion, walking toward the Hill with Simon carrying His Cross, and the women of Jerusalem weeping and wailing for Him. I was impressed again with the way in which He turned to them and said: 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me. There is no need to weep for Me. You weep for yourselves and for your children, but not for Me!' What does that mean? That this Cross, toward which He was going, on which He was going so soon to be impaled, and all that was going to fall upon Him there, was not the end. The women may have thought so,

but He knew that it was not. Even then tears for Him were not justified: ". . . who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross . . ." (Hebrews xii. 2). The way of the Cross was life, not death. This was how He was going to secure that for which He had come, and which God had intended for man all down the ages, and from before the world was.

"I *am* the way, the truth, and the life." Dear friends, we cannot get outside of that! If we comprehended what those three terms mean, that would be all that we need. They compass everything.

The New Testament, then, introduces this eternal will and purpose of God in a Person; but what is the rest of the New Testament about after the Gospels? It is simply the working out of these three things. All the rest of the New Testament is gathered into the way that Christ is, the truth that is in Jesus, and the life that is by His death and resurrection.

Having said that, we can come to our particular message for this time.

THE DIVINE LAWS OF REALIZING THE DIVINE PURPOSE

We must read some Scriptures to get to this:

"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success" (or, as the margin says, "*deal wisely*")—(Joshua i. 8).

"And now, O Israel, hearken unto the statutes and unto the judgements, which I teach you, for to do them; that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord, the God of your fathers, giveth you. Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you" (Deuteronomy iv. 1, 2).

"These words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be for frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thy house, and upon thy gates" (Deuteronomy vi. 6-9).

"He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that"

proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew iv. 4).

The Divine laws of realizing the Divine purpose, of knowing, of doing the will of God, which is the ultimate thing in Christianity. Here it is perfectly clear that it is the law of the absolute government of the Word of God.

We have read from Joshua, and we have intimated already that the Book of Joshua is the resumption, after a nation's failure and perishing in the wilderness, of the Divine will and purpose, and moving forward now under that government. Right there at the beginning, the foundation of this new movement and all that is involved in it, all that it means against a repetition of the failure and tragedy that has been, is the meticulous observance of the Word of God. The Word and the will of God go together, and there is no progress in this great calling into which you and I are called in the mind, the purpose and the will of God except by the Word of God. There must be obedience to the Word, the cherishing of the Word, the binding of the Word upon our lives in all matters. I have said how meticulous the Lord was in that Book of Deuteronomy because, on the one side, there was the terrible tragedy which had taken place and, on the other side, the tremendous prospect. There, in chapter after chapter, He is saying: 'Remember what I said? Remember what I said! Call to remembrance all that I have said to you.' The law of prospect is the government of God's Word. The people had been forty years on probation in the wilderness, and the one thing that stood over that forty years was a testing of the heart as to the Word of God. Remember Deuteronomy viii. 2: "And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God hath led thee these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble thee, to *prove* thee, to know what was in thine heart, *whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.*" In other words: 'Whether thou wouldest obey His Word, and what place His Word had in thy heart.'

The probation of life is always the testing of a wilderness experience. The trials of the journey and of the experiences are, in God's mind, to see what is in our hearts, whether we really have a heart for the Lord and whether, after all our professions and protestations, the will of God is really *the* thing which governs our whole life. The Lord is trying us out on that—"Whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no." The testing is by the Word of God, and perhaps we know something of that daily?

So we come to Joshua, and a new phase begins

on the other side of Jordan with a reaffirmation that the Word of God is to be kept always before the face, on their arms, on their foreheads, on the thresholds of their homes. The Word is always there to govern them. They were a called people, called by God out of Egypt, and called by His name, but the calling is not enough. We have all been called, but, after the call, comes the testing; then, when the testing has been proved, we are chosen.

THE RESULTS OF FAILURE TO OBEY GOD'S WORD

Everything in the Word of God turns upon this one thing: the government of God's Word. Where the Word of God was not honoured there was disaster, and because of failure to do what God had made known as to His will there was calamity. Again and again in the Old Testament we find disaster as the result of a failure to keep the Word of God always before them. Even Moses, who had sacrificed and suffered so much for those people, was at the last forbidden by the Lord to ask any more that he might go into the land. Why? Because the Lord had said something and Moses had not meticulously observed what He had said. 'Well,' you say, 'that is terrible! He is a hard God.' Ah! but you must remember that it was not just Moses—Moses has attained and obtained now, for he was with Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration—but it was the people for ever afterwards who had to learn this lesson: you cannot violate anything that the Lord has said without forfeiting and losing something.

Then we remember David bringing the ark up to Jerusalem and making a new cart on which to carry it. But there was a disaster on the way. The whole thing, about which they seemed to be having such a good time and feeling that they were being prospered and blessed of the Lord, turned into that threshing-floor calamity. Uzzah died before the Lord, and David was angry with Him that day. He turned the ark aside and went and sulked, nursing his grievance with the Lord. But he got over that, and we do get over these things! We have those bad times with the Lord, but when we get over them He is able to show us the meaning of what He has done. David went back to the Word of the Lord and found the Lord's instructions about the carrying of the ark. He had not said: 'Thou shalt make a new cart.' That was not in the Word at all, indeed, it was another heathen idea. Then David saw and said: 'Oh, it is written that the Levites shall carry the ark.' The tragedy of that day, with the all good intentions, was because the

Word of God was overlooked and missed, but the Lord never overlooks His Word.

There may be many secret tragedies in our lives, many arrests in our spiritual progress, not because our motives were not good, but the best motives may just miss the particular thought of God, and He does not substitute a good motive for something that He has laid down as law.

This all sounds very terrible, but we must take it further, and this is where our hearts are really going to be touched. The answer to these failures was not just a sort of legal, mechanical way of observing some statement in the Bible. The issue was very much bigger than that! If you will look at every such instance in the Old Testament, the big and the small, you will see that it was always a matter of the Lord's presence. Do you remember Ai? What had the Lord said about the principles of spiritual progress? You know what He had said! The people came to Ai, and you know what Achan did. He violated the Word of God, and the whole of Israel was arrested in their progress, brought to a standstill, and there was a scene of tragedy. But what was the real tragedy? The manifest presence of the Lord had departed! Is not the manifest presence of the Lord everything? Oh, we do not want anything greater than that! Surely there is no heart here which is interested in anything in this life and in this world apart from the presence of the Lord! If only we know that the Lord is with us, what a lot of difference that makes! There may be a lot of victories, a lot of strength, yes, there may be conflicts, as there were with Joshua afterwards, there may be many problems and many difficulties in life, but if only we are assured that the Lord is with us, that is everything, is it not? I tell you that is my battleground all the way along. The devil is so cruel, using the very discipline of God meant to bring us into His greater fullness, using those trials as accusations against God, and making us feel that because of this situation and circumstance, this trial, this difficulty, this thing that is so hard, the Lord is not with us. Don't you listen to that lie! You will be absolutely worsted, ruled out of all the conflict and the possession if you take on that lie of the devil.

The presence of the Lord is the battleground. What can we do without His presence? How can we get on without it? What would our meetings be but for His presence? If only we are able to say after our prayer-meetings: 'The Lord was with us. He was there and we knew His presence.' That is life, and that is strength.

Now all that in the Bible, as you see, hung upon this Word of God. He is with us according to His

Word, on the basis of His Word and He is only with us as His Word is in our hearts. So the Apostle says: "Let the word of God dwell in you richly in all wisdom" (Colossians iii. 16), and that is the presence of the Lord. He stood back at Ai and in the incident in David's life because of the defaulting over His Word. And it is always like that.

THE TRUSTEE OF THE WORD

The Holy Spirit! You see, He is present as a jealous Trustee of the Word, will and purpose of God. I thank God for that! You are probably thinking: 'This is rather oppressive, rather heavy, exacting, demanding and rather hard!' Oh, yes, that is true and right, *but* the Holy Spirit . . . ! For what has He come? Why is He here? Why is He in us? He is, as I have said, the jealous custodian of the Word of God. He is very watchful. He is referred to as the "seven Spirits of God" (Revelation iii. 1), which means complete spiritual knowledge, discernment and perception. If I may put it in this way, the Holy Spirit is here in trust with the will of God, in trust with the purpose of God, and, therefore, in trust with the Word of God, for these things all go together. The known presence of the Holy Spirit, and the working of the energy of the Holy Spirit are all in this connection—to bring us, by way of the Word of God, to the end to which we have been called. The Word of God is the ground of the Holy Spirit's activity. You see that illustrated here in the Old Testament. The Spirit of God is in charge. He is the Captain of the hosts of the Lord. In the New Testament the Holy Spirit has come to dwell within in order to keep us on the line of the Word of God, and if we are sensitive to Him, without perhaps knowing the particular Scripture that applies, we shall know that something is not right. We are just out of adjustment with the Lord. There is something that does not say: 'That is right and good and proper.' There is a sort of pause in us. The Holy Spirit knows why that is, and if we will seek the Lord about it and turn to His Word, He will just put His finger on something; and we say: 'Why, that has been there all the time, but here my situation just contradicts it.' So we are tested by the Word as to the heart, and the Holy Spirit has come for that. It is the ground for His working.

Let me say to young Christians, out of a long experience, that, although you may not understand a great deal of the Bible, and you may not seem to enjoy it, *read* it! Even if it is labour, read it, work at it, get down to it. You know, you have a tape recorder inside you! We have a lot of tapes in the

office of messages spread over many years. Sometimes one is asked for and we look it out, and just occasionally I want to hear a bit of it. Then I say: 'Did I say that? Oh, yes, it is coming back to me now from somewhere far away. Yes, I did say it.' Have you tried to remember something, someone's name, some person or some particular thing, but it has gone? 'What *was* that person's name? When was it that *that* happened? Where was it? Oh, I give it up!' Do you? If you understand anything about psychology, you won't give it up. When it happens with me my folk say: 'He has gone away!' I cannot let go of that thing until I have remembered it! I am not looking anywhere for it, but I set my mind to recover it, and then the point comes where I feel utterly defeated. But I have learnt something, and I let go. Later on, the thing just comes floating into my mind. Where has it come from? My tape recorder, speaking back after perhaps many years. Have you had that experience?

The Word of God is like that. I am so glad that in my early Christian life I set myself to a systematic study of the Bible, book by book. I did not understand it all, indeed, there are many things today that I do not understand, but in those days I could often have closed the book because it did not seem to mean anything. But I worked at it; I analysed the books without spiritual understanding, but I worked—and am I not glad today! If I have any spiritual ministry today it is the Holy Spirit working upon what is there. The Word is there, and the Spirit works upon it. In times of need it becomes more than the Word—it becomes the life.

Young Christians, do not give up the Bible because it is difficult. Work at it, and the time will come when you will say: 'Thank God for that hard labour over the Bible!' One of the greatest, if not the greatest, Bible expositors of this last century said to me once: 'Sometimes it is such a weariness in my work with the Bible that I almost wish there was no Bible there!' Well, he laboured at it, but the fruit of his ministry is all over the world.

The Spirit works upon the Word. Give Him His ground. It is the ground of spiritual progress by the Holy Spirit. There may be an unconscious control of the Word in the sense that you may not know exactly what a Scripture is, but you know there is something that has got hold of you. That is the Spirit working. The thing is written inside you by the Spirit. The new covenant is written upon the heart.

That is the beginning; but what does this mean after all? It may still seem objective to you, just things said, but spiritual progress in the will of

God unto the full purpose of God in our calling means that demands will not be made without a very meticulous observance of what is in the Bible.

Why this word today? Oh, it is born out of a tremendous amount of exercise over recent years! Why the weakness of Christianity today? Why the weakness of so many Christians? Why the slowness of their spiritual progress? Why the failure of so many? I put my finger upon a large number of things that are here in the Word of God, as clearly to be seen as anything can be, and I look at those Christians and find that in their behaviour, in their appearance, in their conduct and way of going on, in their relationships, there is just as clear and definite a contradiction of what is here in the Bible as anything could be. The Bible has something to say about anything that you can think of. If I mentioned some of the things that the Bible speaks of, you would be surprised: 'The Bible says something about *that*?' Yes, it does! What is the meaning of the tragedy of so many marriages? That is a practical point! Then you go behind and ask: 'Why did the marriage take place at all? On what ground? A fascination? An infatuation? An emotion? An impulse? A desire to be married anyhow?' It is a tragedy, because that marriage was not based upon a real spiritual relatedness. The first thing was not given its place, because there were other interests. The Word says precisely: "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers" (II Corinthians vi. 14). Are you going to make spiritual progress if you violate that? No! There will certainly be tragedy sooner or later. I take that as an example, but I could mention many other things that I am seeing in Christianity today.

I am trying to be faithful with you young Christians, because I am deeply concerned for you that you do not miss God's best, God's fullest, and so I say that that depends upon your having the Word of God in you, so that the Holy Spirit can touch something and say: 'Now, what about this?' I want to be serious on this matter, because it is a pressing issue in Christianity today. The Christianity that is being produced now is a terrible caricature of Christ. Young Christians, having God's fullest and best depends upon your being serious about the Word of God.

There is the other side, of course, and what a blessed thing it is to feel that there is no impediment, no restraint with the Lord, that there is a clear way, and that the presence of the Lord is very real! Heaven is opened! I know of nothing more blessed in all life than those times when there is no cloud between the Lord and myself, and His

presence is so real and so wonderful. I wish it were always like that! We sing the hymn:

“These were but seasons, beautiful and rare;
Abide with me, and they shall ever be.”

Well, that is the wrong way of putting it! It should be:

“Let me abide with Thee, and they shall ever be.”

Deviations bring a cloud, but there is nothing more precious in all human history than this joy of the Lord, this peace of God, this sense that the Lord is for you, not against you. You have days, hours, weeks of spiritual ecstasy, and so it is worth it to be obedient and let the Lord's Word rule in your heart, as the Scripture says:

When the Lord Jesus was dealing with the devil in the wilderness, He was dealing with an evil person, but He was dealing with very much more than that—He was dealing with the whole issue of life and death. The devil was trying to get Him, coerce Him, tempt Him, constrain Him, compel Him to take a way which was out of the will of

God and would mean premature death, a death which would be death and not victory. The Lord Jesus was dealing with this whole issue of life and death, so underline and encircle the word: “It is *written*, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” Put that in the positive way, ruling out the negative clause: ‘Man shall *live* by every word that cometh out of the mouth of God’—and that is God's thought.

Suffer this personal word: I was very near to despair a little while ago, especially in the realm of ministry. I went to the Lord, and He turned me to a Scripture which hit me like a sledgehammer: “Preach the word, be instant in season (that is very easy!), out of season (when everything says: ‘This is not the time’); but preach to reprove, rebuke, exhort”—and here we are!

If you have had too much reproof, too much rebuke, well, I exhort you: Give the word its place. The Holy Spirit will do the rest and you will go on the way with unimpeded progress.

(To be continued)

EQUIPMENT FOR THE MINISTRY

“And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent . . . but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue” (Exodus iv. 10).

“And the Lord . . . said go, and thou shalt save Israel . . . And he (Gideon) said, Oh, my Lord . . . behold . . . I am the least in my father's house” (Judges vi. 14, 15).

“Then said I, woe is me! for I am undone . . . And he (the Lord) said, Go . . .” (Isaiah vi. 5, 9).

“Then said I, Ah! Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a child . . . The Lord said . . . Thou shalt go . . .” (Jeremiah i. 6, 7).

“I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son . . . And the Lord took me . . . and said unto me, Go . . .” (Amos vii. 14, 15).

“And he appointed twelve that they might be with him, and that he might send them forth” (Mark iii. 14).

“Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me” (Acts i. 8).

THE last words quoted above are the answer to all the others. Although Pentecost marked a new epoch and method of the Holy Spirit's activity, yet throughout all time God's work has been done through the Spirit's agency. Were we asked what is the essential and indispensable equipment for the work of God we would say unhesitatingly; The anointing and filling with the Holy Spirit!

In the instances cited above we have men of vastly different types, but they are all brought to a common basis. Moses was a man of tremendous natural and acquired ability. There was initiative, drive, passion, devotion and courage on the emotional and volitional side, linked with “all the wisdom of the Egyptians” on the intellectual side, and evidently considerable strength on the physical. Isaiah and Jeremiah were not without a wealthy endowment of inherited social, religious, and ecclesiastical advantages and good training. Then what need we say about Paul on this side? On the other hand, Gideon, Amos and most of

the Apostles were of humble and simple birth, meagre education, and few worldly advantages. Of the latter it is recorded that "they were ignorant and unlearned men". All these, we have said, had to be brought to a common basis. Through painful and sometimes long drawn-out discipline and trial the former had to come to the place where they recognized that only God could do His own work, and that He never uses any man or his natural equipment except on the ground of an utter dependence upon Him: that gifts, training, ability *as such* do not count with God and are only of service when the man has been translated from a natural ground to a spiritual through the deep inworking of the Cross in its principles and laws. Nothing but spiritual endowments can meet spiritual forces, and this is the background of all the work of God.

God may use the gifts with which He has entrusted men by nature or acquisition, but not until they have been brought through death on the natural plane to life on the spiritual. Moses went that way; Paul went that way; and so have all who have really been used of God for *Spiritual* and *Eternal* ends; that is, if the worker as well as the work was to be accepted.

No one will think that we are against all-round training and equipment. Far be it from us to suggest that this is of no vital consequence. What we are emphasizing is that though given every possible natural or acquired endowment, education, natural ability, zeal, evangelical faith and doctrine, a knowledge of Christian work, etc., there may yet remain an essential without which all this is going to fail. This superlative factor is: "filled with the Holy Spirit."

On the other hand, a Spirit-filled man is never one who holds a brief for ignorance or despises and neglects such acquisitions of knowledge as will be ground upon which the Lord may work. It is one of the romances of the Spirit's activity that under His stimulation and quickening many of the most illiterate have become able and eager to master things for which they had neither desire nor ability before.

Now these simple basic things lead us on further. The Lord Jesus as

THE MODEL SERVANT

declared: 'I do nothing of myself; as I hear I speak.' 'The words that I speak, I speak not from myself.' 'The works that I do, I do not from myself.' Here is even a sinless "myself" refusing to speak His own words or do His own works. He was deliberately hanging and drawing upon the

Father for everything. It is clear that He realized that even in His own sinless case this was necessary, and to do otherwise was to lay His mission open to infinite peril from without. Thus it was an utterness of God. For such an utterness—which, let us urge, must characterize all who are to most closely approximate to God's ideal servant—there must somewhere at some time be a zero point on man's side. This zero point is clearly seen in the life and ministry of so many of the Lord's servants—the time when despair of everything well-nigh engulfed them, and 'God was their only asset'.

But is it necessary that this point should only be reached at a more or less late stage in Christian life and service, after perhaps, years of activity? Should there be a considerable degree of ineffectiveness, failure and abortion because such a large percentage of the effort and activity is "in the flesh", or of man? It is necessary that at last, perhaps at long last, the big framework, the loud hammering, the feverish busyness, etc., should begin to fall away and the genuine spiritual and eternal result be comparatively small. We may settle it once and for all that *only what the Holy Spirit does will attain unto God's end and remain eternally.*

Surely God would have zero on man's side reached at the beginning! Surely this is according to the experience of men in Scripture! At least it was a definite registering of that point to which they were continually brought back if they tended to move beyond it in self-sufficiency.

This we believe most earnestly to be the true nature of training for the Lord's work alongside of, and in company with, a growing knowledge of Himself in His word and in experience. The only knowledge of the Word of God which is of any profit in service is experimental knowledge. That knowledge is the knowledge of God Himself which makes the Word live.

Moses was trained for His life work in the hard school of inaction. Forty years in a wilderness tending sheep for a man of a tremendously active disposition! He had set out with great visions. His motive was good and the end in view was right. His filling up of the outline, however, was mistaken. How to be patient with wrong without condoning it or losing a passion for right is one of the big lessons to be learned by those who would deliver men. Not to put a halo of romance about service for men and to think that there will be a due appreciation of one's self-sacrifice without becoming cynical by reason of disillusionment is another. Not in any way, manner, tone or conduct to suggest superiority is a third. These were some of the minor

lessons which Moses had to learn, but they were themselves big ones. Dependence, faith, obedience, humility were the primary things, and these cannot be got from books or lectures.

Isaiah had to have a vision by which he was overwhelmed with his own unfitness.

Paul had to come off his intellectual, ecclesiastical, traditional, official high horse with a tremendous thud and grovel in the dust in subjection to the hated and despised "Jesus".

The disciples had to learn many lessons as to their own miserable inability to satisfy the heart of their Divine Master, and, at length, they all suffered the shame of having been proved incapable of believing through the Cross.

This is all necessary training and preparation. How few there are who would voluntarily accept a course of training like this! But this surely ought to be the nature of the work done in a place for the preparation of God's servants. There should be a handing over to the Holy Spirit to take into and through all such experiences of spiritual discipline as are necessary to a deep knowledge of God. There should be the knocking of the bottom out of our ideas of work and service. There should be the making of everything inward and not outward; spiritual and not natural; from God and not from ourselves. If needs be, there should be the discipline of inaction. It is so easy to be content if only we are busy and active, but often this only gets in God's way, and He has to take our work away in order to teach us that it is *Himself*, and not service as such. With many the Lord has to adopt a wearing-out policy, for they will not yield otherwise.

THE IDEAL SCHOOL OF THE PROPHETS

The ideal 'School of the Prophets' is that in which the spiritual life has first consideration; where the Holy Spirit is dealing with the individual; and where the Word of God is being made necessary for light, strength, comfort and direction. If we are going to live by the Word, the Word must live for us, and experience is the meeting-place of life and knowledge.

No training centre is adequate which is only intellectual and practical in the sense of doing work. There must be primarily the attention to the spiritual life, its nurturing and directing, and especially the presence of the Holy Spirit must be sought and guarded for that work which can never be done from without.

Now, having said all this, we come back to recognize that, *in principle*, this was the basis of the mighty activities of God from the time of the fulfilment of Acts i. 8. The Cross, in all its fullness,

was brought by the Holy Spirit into the lives of those first believers and witnesses, and the change in the character of the apostles is most noticeable. They became selfless, humble, fearless, full of love, patience, and long-suffering. 'Position' or 'place', reputation, prestige, 'success', popularity, etc., no longer motivated their service. Note how on everything they are directed and controlled by the Spirit! The Lord is released when the bands of the self-life in all its forms in His servants are burnt up by the Fire. As through His Cross He came to His own personal liberation to the boundless, so, as His Cross is planted deeply in the natural life of His servants, He is free to do His mightier works. Oh, that we could see early enough in our lives that when Christ went to the Cross He not only took our sins, but He took us! and that not just as sinners, but as men; as preachers, teachers, workers, and everything, so that "henceforth it is no longer I, but Christ". All too late some of us have had to be crucified in one or more of these capacities; and through death preaching has had to be put off the human level and born again from above. And the same with other things. Oh, for a new company of such who right at the beginning are put there! Then God will do His new thing and we shall see a fresh release of the Lord. He is not straitened in Himself, but He is straitened in the natural activities of His servants, which activities are brought over into spiritual things by the horizontal method instead of by the vertical—that is, along the human line, instead of by the Cross, the resurrection, ascension and descent from above.

As it was in the time of the types the strictest laws governed the anointing with the holy oil, and it was repeatedly stressed that "upon man's flesh shall not the oil come", so the Lord, who is no less particular today, will not give His Spirit to come upon man's "flesh"—man's self-life. All that must first come under the power of the Blood and be taken to the Cross to give the Spirit a clear way. The first witnesses had nothing to gain, but everything to lose in this life by even naming the Name of Jesus. There was nothing that could be in the slightest degree a sop for the senses. Those at Jerusalem lost everything very early and were scattered abroad. From without the Lord kept everything pure and free. But He never departs from His principle, His original premise, and where He is allowed He will work this state into the very spirit and life of His servant in order that all things may be of Himself, and "whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever". The law of the corn of wheat most surely operates: enlargement through limitation, gain out of loss, life out of death.

BALANCED CHRISTIANITY

I

1. Man is conscious of two worlds, an outer and an inner, a public and a private, an objective and a subjective. He is conscious also that these two worlds act and react upon each other; he is influenced by that world around and he in turn influences it.

2. He is further conscious that his own inner and private world is a triple realm, each of the three elements of which interact upon one another. In the one realm work *thoughts*, ideas, reasonings, plans. These thoughts upon various subjects arouse *feelings*, of love or hatred, likes or dislikes, affection or aversion. In the third realm of his inner life which man can distinguish he observes the *will* at work; he makes decisions for or against a proposed action or course.

This triple and interacting world is termed the *heart*, because it is the centre of man's whole life, and out of it flow the issues of life, as the blood flows from the physical heart to all parts of man's body.

3. Man is further and painfully conscious that both the world around and the world within are in disorder. Something is radically wrong with both. The physical world and its forces now help him, now hurt him. The moral influences, also, of the beings he touches are now a blessing, now a bane, now they purify him, now corrupt him; and he thus influences others.

4. Moreover, the uniform experience of all mankind, continued through thousands of years, has proved man's personal and complete inability to reduce to order either the world without or the world within. The confusion and corruption of both are more awful today than ever.

Each man knows that his *thoughts* are never absolutely right, true, correct, pure. He thinks wrongly, forms opinions that usually need correcting, has ideas that he knows are foul, or cruel, or unworthy. These he can never wholly exclude, or dismiss, or purify. He knows, too, that his *feelings* are more or less selfish, prejudiced, deceitful, and are all too likely to hurry him into actions he knows to be unwise or wrong. He is also aware that his *will* is inconstant, unreliable, too easily swayed by his desires or dislikes, and too often divided, distracted, that is, dragged in opposite directions.

To right-minded persons all this is a cause of grief and deep solicitude: but what can be done? In his soberer moments man responds sadly to the

cry of an old writer: "Wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?" (Romans vii. 24).

II

5. Now it is a momentous fact that once, and only once since this disorder entered man's nature, there lived on earth a man whose inner world was completely and continuously free from disorder. He never had thoughts that he needed to correct or regret; He never felt feelings that were unloving; His will was single, undistracted, always directed to truth, right, purity.

6. Moreover, He manifested also a notable power of control over the world around Him. He reduced tempests to quietness; He walked serenely on storm-tossed water; His word of command caused food to multiply, diseases to disappear, health and vigour to revive; the very dead were restored to life, showing that His authority extended to that region of the universe also.

7. But more notable was His influence upon the moral world around. He read the thoughts of men's hearts; the wicked slunk from His presence convicted and ashamed; the repentant were pardoned and granted peace as to the guilty past; the faint-hearted were cheered, the sad comforted, the perplexed guided: there was no sincere heart but was the better for contact with Jesus of Nazareth.

Even yet more noteworthy was His authority over demons, those invisible aggravators of human discord and disorder. They trembled before Him, fled at His command, and their victims became gloriously free from their debasing influence.

Ample proof of all this is found in the four accounts of His life known as the Gospels.

8. The advent of such a Man in this disordered universe was of the highest possible importance and significance. It showed that there is a life-energy superior to all forces of disorder, though lived under truly human conditions. "Our Saviour, Christ Jesus, abolished death and brought life and incorruption to light" (II Timothy i. 10). Before His life on earth it had not here been demonstrated conclusively that there exists a life that corruption cannot reach, for in fact all other life had decayed.

9. But *what* life had this Man? It was human life, showing all the normal, ideal marks of this. But why, then, did His life prevail in the battle against sin while all other human beings fail in this battle? One who lived with Him three and a half years and watched Him closely, by night as well as by day, has left on record the result of his scrutiny

of Jesus. He tells us that he came to see that working through the human life of Christ there was another and higher life, one that had the impress and marks of eternity, for it showed no trace of that variability, frailty, transitoriness that the life of earth displays. It was, indeed, that *eternal* life, that *divine* life, which had always existed with God the Father and was now in Jesus being manifested unto men on earth (I John i. 2). Unaided human life, even when originally sinless, had always succumbed to the forces of disorder: human life conjoined with, suffused with, reinforced by eternal life was superior thereto. The Son of Mary, the Son of man, was the eternal Son of God, God manifest in human nature.

"O loving wisdom of our God!
When all was sin and shame,
A second Adam to the fight
And to the rescue came.

"O wisest love! that flesh and blood
Which did in Adam fail,
Should strive afresh against the foe,
Should strive and should prevail.

"And that a higher gift than grace
Should flesh and blood refine,
God's presence, and His very self,
And essence all-divine."

III

10. This uniqueness of Jesus Christ involves, as a necessary consequence, that to Him all other men must resort if they would find the secret and power of victory, order, peace; for He stands forth the solitary Man who ever held that secret, secured that victory, enjoyed that peace. There

never has been any other person who has saved sinners from their sins, or was entitled to say: 'I am the Light upon all your problems; come unto Me and I will give you rest from disorder and disaster.'

God sent forth His Son to be the Saviour of the world, and there is none other. Man must fix his attention upon Christ, as an Object outside of himself, if order is ever to reign within himself. To such as will not turn to Christ there must of simple necessity apply His words: "Ye will not come to me that ye may have life" (John v. 40); for none other of the sons of man has ever possessed that life or could impart it to another.

11. This indicates a fundamental principle of the true life of a Christian: it is a result of occupation of heart with Christ as a historical Person, the facts concerning whom are learned, believed, weighed, remembered. It is therefore no marvel that the Prince of darkness and disorder has ever striven to obscure and pervert the facts as to the Person of Jesus Christ, for thus he hinders his blinded dupes from trusting Christ (II Corinthians iv. 3, 4).

In the second place this involves meditation upon the Bible as the message from God through which alone those facts can be ascertained. For it is evident that God has seen fit that the knowledge of the facts, dispensed at first through persons who had known Jesus, has been preserved for later generations solely in the Bible. Again, therefore, it is no marvel that the Father of lies has striven ceaselessly to spread doubts and denials as to the trustworthiness of these records, so that his victims should not, through them, come to the knowledge of Christ.

(To be completed)

G. H. L.

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THE MISSION, THE MEANING, AND THE MESSAGE OF JESUS CHRIST

XI. IN THE LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS

IT is not our intention to enter upon a general exposition of this Letter. Our present concern is with some of the questions which it raises in the light of history, and that history at, and from, the time when the Letter was written.

Firstly, there was the situation at the end of the Apostle Paul's life. Here is a man writing under the guidance of the Holy Spirit about the greatness of the Church; its eternal election and vocation; its Divine unity, interrelatedness, manifold function, and spiritual warfare. All this and much more, with a background of his relationship with churches in Asia, and particularly with Ephesus. We remember his extended time of ministry in Ephesus and the wonderful response thereto (Acts xix. 19). Later he said to the elders there that he had not 'shunned to declare (unto them) the whole counsel of God' (Acts xx. 20), and when meeting those elders on his journey to Jerusalem, we read of the very touching farewell to them and how they wept and sorrowed

at his departure. And now, *at most* seven years later, he writes to Timothy that "all they in Asia be turned from me" (II Timothy i. 15). If Paul died (by execution) in the year A.D.67 and John wrote the Revelation in the year A.D. 95 (as is most strongly believed) then in less than thirty years a very big spiritual change had taken place in Ephesus (Revelation ii. 1-7): "Thou hast left thy first love . . . From whence thou art fallen . . ." etc. Paul's triumphant ministry; Paul's departure sorrowed over; and now Paul repudiated, discredited or forsaken. And yet, this Letter is Divinely preserved and blessed to countless believers through all the centuries!

But what of subsequent history? Through all these centuries to what degree has there been in this world a representation and expression of the Church as we have it in "Ephesians"? Where in all the world can we find such an expression in our day? It would seem that the last and least company of

Christians is involved in the struggle for unity, for impact, for spiritual ascendancy! Anything precious to the Lord is so bitterly assailed that its fellowship and fullness are all too soon disrupted. It is quite evident that when Paul wrote his last Letters—to Timothy—there was an incipient movement toward what has now become almost general—the institutional Church with form but without organic life. With all the books that have been written on “Ephesians”, and all the extolling of it as “the greatest document ever penned”; with all the acclaiming of it as *the* greatest revelation of the Church, where can we find anything that approximates to it in reality?

The questions confronting us with this Letter in hand are:

Is it just idealistic? Do we have to say in regard to it what Dr. Campbell Morgan said about Ezekiel’s Temple: “It is just what God would have had if He could have had His way”? Or again: Is this Church of “Ephesians” for the future in the “ages of the ages”, a phrase used so much by Paul? In which case is it futile to labour and hope for it now? Are we to accept the “total ruin” theory? Comprehensively, with all the wonders and glories of the beginnings of Christianity, was there *ever* anything wholly corresponding to this Letter? Are you shocked with these questions? Do you think that, after all, it is just a comparative approximation, more or less? That position can hardly satisfy those who have stood for the revelation in the Ephesian Letter.

Therefore, is there some other answer? Is the answer in the direction of a misunderstanding and misapprehension of the Letter? It is here that we touch what will not only answer our distressing questions, but put us into the realm of the immense spiritual values and dynamics of the revelation contained in this document. But let there be no misapprehension here. It will be the greatest challenge and test to Christendom and Christianity, while at the same time involving in a *very* real conflict with all the cosmic forces which have so bitterly fought against the true understanding of this Divine revelation!

Far from being only idealistic or mystical, we shall see as we proceed that it is an intensely realistic document. There are one or two things that must be recognized before we can proceed to consider its answer to the confrontations mentioned.

THE COMPREHENSIVENESS OF “EPHESIANS”

This is not a new and different presentation of truth, but an inclusive embodiment of all New

Testament teaching. The Gospels are here. (See our early chapters.) “Romans” is here, for the total setting aside of the first Adam is implicit here. “Corinthians” is here, for the “spiritual” man is demanded, and the “natural” man would spoil everything here. “Galatians” is here, for there can be no compromise, no mid-course, no perversion or two contraries here; and so on.

Having pointed that out, let us proceed to consider four factors which support the present-age validity of “Ephesians”.

THE STANDPOINT OF “EPHESIANS”

This can prove to be the most testing, searching, and revolutionary factor in Church history. The point of view certainly does determine everything. Five times in the Letter the word “Heavenly” is used (i. 3, 20, ii. 6, iii. 10, vi. 12), relating respectively to the believer’s blessings; Christ’s exaltation; the believer’s position; the Church’s vocation; and the Church’s warfare. Everything is viewed from above, but that ‘aboveness’ is not confined to location. It means another way of estimating, defining, judging. It is a different mindedness from the earthly. On this matter the statement of God is: “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah lv. 8–9). It becomes necessary, therefore, for us to be brought to the place where we see what God is looking for and at, as so vastly different from our own mentality. This is the key to everything, and, as we have said, most revolutionary. Our mentality as to the Church is almost, if not entirely, earthly.

What *are* we looking for and at in this respect? Let us sift down from what may be the largest to the smallest. Is it a national Church, Roman, Anglican, Greek, Dutch (Reformed), etc.? Is it denominational, Methodist, Baptist, Episcopal, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Independent, etc.? Is it ‘Free’ or ‘State’; Undenominational, Interdenominational? Is it ‘Open’ or ‘Exclusive’? Is it something with certain particular characteristics and techniques of practice, form, and behaviour? Is it a ‘New Testament Church’, or churches, with certain things taken from the New Testament to constitute it? Is it a cathedral, or a building, great or small? Is it a place at all, whether simple, plain, or ornate? Is God looking down from the “Heavenlies” and focusing His attention upon, or looking for, *any* of these? Is this what He wants? Do these things interest Him at all? Is He impressed with the

regalias and adornments; with the pomp and processions of display? Do our ecclesiastical and ministerial attire and dress, robes, vestments, gowns, hoods, impress the Almighty? Does He look down upon them with admiration and wonder? Does He view them at all, or ignore them? If He does behold them, may it not be with pity, or even amusement? Poor little people playing at churches and chapels, like Jesus's children in the market-place playing at weddings and funerals! Is *any* or *all* of this what takes the eye of "He that sitteth in the heaven"? (Psalm ii. 4).

All or any of this may be our way of viewing the Church, and it is wholly an earthly view! If we saw from Heaven's standpoint, how foolish so much of it would become to us. Just as the biggest things of earth, whether people or mountains, are all the same in elevation when we look down from a high aerial position, so the things so important to man down here lose their importance when we see God's standards of values.

HISTORY'S VERDICT

The verdict of history is clearly that God *does not* either tie Himself up with, nor preserve things on this earth in *themselves*. Tennyson, the poet, said:

"Our little systems have their day;
They have their day and cease to be."

Paul said: "The things which are seen are temporal [transient]" (II Corinthians iv. 18).

History's verdict upon things which have ceased to fulfil *the essential purpose of their existence*, however greatly they may have served a Divine purpose at some time, is that God has left them and they have either been destroyed or left desolate. So it was with the Tent at Shiloh, the Temple in Jerusalem, the 'Churches' in Asia, and numerous other places and things. Nothing is sacred to God if it does not fulfil its Divinely intended purpose. The world, and history, are strewn with such relics; desolation, abandonment, death, and coldness declare God's 'No interest'. Men strive to keep something going; try to live on a past; but the responsibility is left with them, and the limitation of God's sponsorship will slowly wear them out unless the Divine intention is recovered. The Wailing Wall in Jerusalem is a symbol of history's verdict, and centuries of tears testify to God-forsakenness.

That is all very sad and tragic, and we yearn to get away from it, learning its lesson, and to come to the answer to it all. We ask again, what has been

We have seen that the Letter to the Ephesians (so-called—it was a circular letter) bounds all the ages from eternity to eternity. Its range is from "before the foundation of the world" (i. 3) unto "the ages of the ages" (iii. 21). But what is the focus of this Letter in *that eternal context*? There is no missing it. One fragment focuses all.

"Unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever" (margin: "unto the ages of the ages"). You must read this whole Letter (which you can do in a few minutes) with the object of seeing the place and mention of Christ in it. (And the companion Letter, Colossians, with it.)

This Letter goes back before Genesis, and takes up Genesis. In both a Person is brought into view, and that Person is never again lost sight of. By personal figures; by types, symbols, prophecies, and a thousand means; in feasts and ordinances, that One Person is ever present, latent or patent! By name He is the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Christos. Every anointing points to Him. He is the focus of the ages and the eternities. What is Heaven *exclusively* looking for and looking at? Emphatically, only that which is essentially that Person. Not now symbols, figures, types, representations, but reality, actuality! No, not the "Church" as something objective! No, not the Kingdom of heaven as place and object of perception! "The kingdom of heaven cometh not with observation" (Luke xvii. 20). It is a fallacy to think and speak of the Church without meaning Christ Himself. They are not subject and object! They are one. The Church is His Body, His wife; they are "one flesh" (v. 31). This is "Ephesians". It is equally fallacious to think and speak of the Kingdom of heaven and not mean Himself. They are the same. In the Gospels the two are brought together. The Messiah is present both as King and Kingdom. The very nature of the Kingdom corresponds to that of "the Son of Man". It, as He, is from heaven.

All this, and what it implies, was *an absolute revolution in Messianic mentality*.

How does it all answer the tremendous questions with which we began, in relation to the Letter to the Ephesians? In this way. What God and Heaven are looking for and at is not *something* called the Church, nor for local churches, *as such*. God and Heaven are looking for Christ, in His nature, heavenly nature; in *spirit* and *truth*; in eternal life; in conduct and behaviour; in virtues and character; in influence and impact; and in victory over sin, Satan and the world. *It is positively not locality in*

terms of geography, but "Wheresoever two or three are gathered together in [into] my name, *there am I.*" That may be on a ship or in an aeroplane, neither of which can be fixed in locality. Christ *may* be in Ephesus, or Laodicea, or any other place, but it is the Christ which defines the Church, not the place! Christ may be in the congregation, the institution, the denomination, while none of them—as a whole—may be in Christ. We seek Him. We gather unto Him. *He* is the Ground; we meet on Him.

There is a vast amount in "Christendom" and "Christianity" to which we have to deliberately close our eyes, and "not know after the flesh", while we seek for what there is of Christ *in people*. "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son." If we cannot find Him, then there is no heavenly fellowship.

How well I am aware that many questions will be provoked by what I have said, and perhaps the most difficult is the one concerning gathering together, and what has become the problem of local churches. The procedure of men has been to start from the outside or from some more or less advanced point of Christian development. To *form* a church or churches. The names may vary; churches, assemblies; congregations; meetings, etc. Some form, either of doctrine, creed, or practice and procedure has been conceived; often with a greater or lesser degree of Scriptural authority; sometimes with a reading *into* Scripture of an interpretation or meaning which is not really there in truth. Sometimes there is a part of the whole truth, so that it is a certain aspect of the truth for which the particular group stands. The reasons and occasions of the numerous 'bodies' or sects or companies are as manifold as there are such bodies. Too often it is something '*formed*' by men, and something which they *set out* to do. To say this is to touch the root of most of the trouble in Christianity. But let us approach it positively.

We are being taught by the Letter to the Ephesians, and what is it saying? We have seen that the Church is Christ, all its parts being parts of His Body. Is that true? Do you believe that? *Not that He has no personal existence apart from His Body, but He is the very personality within the Body* and only death can separate the two. If this identification with Christ is spiritually true, as the New Testament teaches, we have to ask: How did Christ come into being? Did He appear as a full-grown man? Was He made with hands? Was He put together as a composite entity? Did someone, or a group of people, get some ideas as to what He should be and then get to work to give them a form? Perhaps you are smiling, or are scandalized that such things

should be asked. But is that not that which largely expresses the mentality concerning the Church and churches? But how *did* Christ come into this world? Was it not simply by *birth*? There was a seed (that is a Scriptural word about Him from Genesis onward) and that "seed" held the life in which was all the nature, the complexion, the capacity, the form, the purpose, and the destiny of that Entity. That seed was born, and for reproduction was 'planted', fell into the ground and died (John xii. 24). The Church is the issue of that seed, holding the same life and potential. The true Church—wherever found—*must* follow the history of Christ spiritually. It must be born, "not made with hands". "God dwelleth not in temples made with hands"—a statement for which Stephen forfeited his life. It must be begotten of God, born of the Holy Spirit, circumcized (in heart), baptized into His death; raised together with Him; anointed for its ministry; led into the battle of the ages; and joined with Him on heavenly ground. It is Christ, always, everywhere! This is "Ephesians". But one word more remains to be said. It concerns

THE BASIS OF ALL

This Letter to the Ephesians (so-called) is a kind of culmination, a summary. The *spiritual* sequence is right, if the chronology is not in order. The Cross stands central, universal and supreme. The Church here as the Christ corporately expressed stands on the full ground of the Cross. It is not just the local Cross, the historic Cross, it is the cosmic Cross. In that super-mundane realm Christ—by His Cross—stripped off the principalities and powers (Colossians ii. 15) and "led his captivity captive" (Ephesians iv. 8), and by His victory placed His Church above all. But this is inclusive of Romans, Corinthians and Galatians. See what the Cross means in those situations, and then gather that together and you have "Ephesians".

Our "Church ground" must be Christ, only Christ, and this must decide everything and be the answer to all our "Church" problems. But let us hasten to add, that the Letter before us does show how very great are the values of a corporate expression of Christ *anywhere*. These values are to the individual believer and to the world around. Such matters are bound up with this Body presence of Christ as protection and covering; building up and maturing; rooting and grounding; spiritual power and ascendancy; mutual functioning and ministry; a testimony and impact in the realms of satanic and angelic intelligences. All this is in the Letter as related to a true expression of Christ. If

we ask: 'Can such an expression be?' our answer is: 'Yes, if not in perfection and completeness, it can be in vital measure.' The tenses of "Ephesians" may help us. The past: "You *did* he quicken when you *were* dead." That was the beginning. There is much that is retrospective as to their hitherto spiritual history. The present—the *continuous* present—the bulk of the Letter is concerned with growth, building up, "unto the full-grown man". Future, "that he might present to himself a glorious church". "Glory in the church . . . unto the ages of the ages."

Note: The eternal and present criterion or test of

"Church", whether universal or local, is the presence of Christ. Is He found there? If we are in the Spirit, can we meet Him, and truly say: 'The Lord was there today!?' The presence of Christ determines whether that is the true Church. The *measure* of Christ will determine, not *basic* relationship, but the measure of fellowship; spontaneous spiritual mutuality.

The standpoint—a heavenly position, not earthly.

The focus—"Christ—all, and in all."

The basis—the Cross, initial and continuous.

The dynamic—the "power that worketh in us".

THE BATTLE FOR LIFE

CHAPTER IV

FELLOWSHIP BETWEEN CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH IN TESTIMONY

Reading: John XVII

KEEPING this chapter well before us, let us turn to two other passages:

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; he who was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, received up in glory" (I Timothy iii. 16).

Before we pass to the other passage, let us notice that the word translated "godliness" in this passage is unique in the New Testament. It is not the word which is commonly used for piety, but the word which means the Divine nature, and the more correct rendering would be: 'Great is the mystery of the Divine nature, which was made visible in flesh.' We mention that because it removes the difficulty which has surrounded this passage for so long.

"... because we are members of his body. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the twain shall become one flesh. This mystery is great: I speak in regard of Christ and of the church" (Ephesians v. 30-32).

In those two passages I think we have an interpretation of chapter xvii. of the Gospel by John. You may take this passage in Timothy and note its clauses, and carrying everything back into that chapter in John's Gospel you will see that there is a twofold connection: firstly, the connection with

Christ personally; secondly, the connection with those who constitute His Church.

"MANIFESTED IN THE FLESH"

The Divine nature was manifested in flesh. We need hardly spend time in applying that phrase to Christ. There is no doubt that it belongs to Him, that He is the One who fits in there, that He verily was God manifest in the flesh, and that the Divine nature did become incarnated in Him. John xvii. quite definitely alludes to the fact: "... they have believed that thou didst send me" (verse 8).

Then John xvii. carries things forward to the Church, and while it does not give the full unveiling of the later New Testament writings when the Holy Spirit had come to open up the fullness of the truth, it clearly intimates the truth about to find fulfilment. We can even say that it introduces that truth: "I in them . . ." (verse 23). That clearly indicates a company constituted as an organism, as a body, of which they are the first members, the nucleus to which others should be continually added through the preaching of the Gospel. Taking their place in the Body thus formed, those who believed would in turn become the vessel of the testimony, the embodiment of Him. Later the Apostle will express it in this way: "Whereby are given unto us exceed-

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ing great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature . . ." (II Peter i. 4). While there is, and ever will remain, a cleft, a division, a distinction between that and any supposition of our thereby becoming God and partaking of Deity, it is none the less true that the great and wonderful reality into which we are all called is the forming of a Body for the indwelling of that Christ of whom it says the Divine nature was manifested in flesh. In this, one object in view was that the manifestation should not cease in this world with the return of Christ to glory, but that there should be a continuation of the earthly manifestation of the Divine nature in Him, but now in Him in His Body here. That is a wonderful and glorious truth. It is a marvellous calling to embody Christ in the Spirit.

But such things are always tests as well as testimonies, always challenges as well as glorious truths. What the Lord is constantly seeking to do with His people, and seemingly more and more so toward the end, is to bring them face to face with the real nature of their calling, and to require that they should face up to it: as we say, toe the line. The very first thing for which the Church is called in its relationship to Christ is to be the manifestation of Him, the Divine nature manifested in flesh: "I in them . . ." The Church's calling is to maintain here on the earth a witness to the presence, the living presence, of the Lord. That may sound elementary, but it is not so elementary when you consider how things are today. One would be led to think from what does exist today that the Church's purpose on the earth is to hold religious services and to do all sorts of good, charitable works, and to keep religion alive in the earth. Well-meaning and well-intentioned! But much can be brought, and is brought, within a compass like that. Almost anything can be put within that range.

I was reading of a church in America where a famous dancer was invited to dance the sermons, to dance the truth of the New Testament, before the congregation. It is pathetically and tragically awful, but there by one in dancing apparel, dancing before a congregation, was supposed to be acted New Testament truth: and it is argued for by Scripture—"dancing before the Lord" (II Samuel vi. 16). Brought right out of the theatrical world into what is called the Church to do that! That is an extreme case, but it can find a place within this idea of keeping religion alive, and can be argued for as good. That is a terrible and solemn departure from the truth, and in the light of such a thing we need to turn again and consider closely what it really is that the Church is here for. The church is

revealed in the New Testament as constituted for the maintenance in this world of a witness to the living presence of the Lord, the Christ of God—to be the embodiment of Him. Nothing less than that, nothing other than that, justifies the continuation of a thing which goes by the name of the Church. As men and women meet the Church, whether in assembly or the individual members thereof in the common walks of life, they should register the presence of the Lord; they should be obliged to recognize the presence of 'something' which is not just ordinary or natural, and not just the men or the women. The presence of the Lord in the assembly of the Lord's people should mean that strangers, the ungodly, coming in should say: 'God is in the midst of you!' That is the witness for which the Church is called into being.

We cannot continue on any other ground. We are not now alluding to certain prevailing conditions in a general way; we are facing this matter ourselves. The only thing which will justify our being together as the Lord's people is that the one uppermost, predominant feature among us shall be that of a witness to the Lord's presence in life in our midst, and that it must needs be confessed: "The Lord is in the midst of that people!" If we lose that we have lost our calling. Oh, that we should see to that! "I in them . . ."

Thus we have the mystery of the Divine nature, which was manifested in the flesh in Christ, continued now in His own. "This mystery is great: I speak in regard of Christ and of the church."

"JUSTIFIED IN THE SPIRIT"

What does that mean? When was the Lord Jesus justified in the spirit? For undoubtedly it refers to Him in the first place. What is the meaning of His being justified in the spirit? I think the answer is this: His resurrection. I believe the justification of the Lord Jesus is to be found in God's raising Him from the dead. There may be a broader meaning, a wider explanation, but I believe that is the heart of the matter—that His justification was when God raised Him from the dead. Peter speaks of Him as having been crucified in the flesh, and quickened in the spirit (I Peter iii. 18). When, with regard to that death, God intervened and raised Him from the dead, God justified Him. That was His justification. He stood then in a place with God where all sin, the judgment of which He had voluntarily endured, was put away; where all and every kind of condemnation which had been made to light upon Him when made sin for us, was destroyed. All sin which was made to rest upon Him having

been put away by His Cross, God raised Him; He is in the place where He is justified: He is the justified One, Jesus Christ the Righteous. That applies to something other than the righteousness, the holiness, which was inherent in Himself; it applies to the righteousness, the holiness, which is His as having been made Man, and made sin, and having borne that sin away in judgment, so that God can be just, and the justifier of all them that believe. When God raised Him from the dead it was His great act of justifying the Lord Jesus.

Now where do we find "resurrection" in John xvii? "Even as thou gavest him authority over all flesh, that whatsoever thou hast given him, to them he should give eternal life" (verse 2). There is no eternal life except on the ground of Christ risen, and He here speaks as though already He is in resurrection. How often in this chapter does the Lord use this phrase: "... whom thou hast given me . . ." He gives three things to those whom the Father has given Him:

1. He gives them eternal life (verse 2).
2. He gives the revelation of the Father's name (verse 6).
3. He gives them the words of God (verse 8).

He gives eternal life. Eternal life is the fruit of His death and resurrection. It could not be said to be eternal life had not death been destroyed and all the possibility of its being corrupted been utterly abolished. This life is ours on the ground of Christ's destruction of death, and of His having entered for us into that life which is deathless.

What is the Church's calling? It has been raised up to maintain the testimony in this world of a life which is triumphant over death. How often that has been said! That is the heart of the Lord's word to us at this time—the power of a deathless life, a life which cannot be conquered and quenched by death. That is set in John xvii. against the background of a world that is hostile, inimical, hating: "... the world hated them . . ." (verse 14); "I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one" (verse 15). (The word "evil" being in the masculine it is justifiable to add the word "one".) Here is an evil one, and a hating world, and any spiritual person will tell you that, in effect, that is death—the spirit and power of death encompassing the Lord's people. Now the Lord does not ask that His Church should be taken out from the world, but that, being in it, it should maintain a testimony against, and contrary to, the spirit of it. The testimony is that of life in the midst of death. The supreme challenge to the Church's faithfulness, to the Church's ministry, to

the Church's true vocation, is as to whether its condition bears true witness that it is not being overcome of spiritual death, that it really is expressing a life which is more powerful than the power of death that is all around it.

Do not allow the word 'Church' to mislead you, and think of some entity apart from yourself. We must make an individual application, because if we are in living union with Christ we are His members, a part of the Church which is His Body, and what we are saying applies to us individually as well as collectively. It is not possible for all to have the advantage of a collective fellowship of the Lord's people. Some have to live in places where they are desperately alone. It may be that there is not very much spiritual life where we are, and not much help along the line of spiritual fellowship; nevertheless this word is for such. We have to do, not only with the responsibility and the challenge, but with the glorious fact that this into which we are called, and which is provided for by the Lord, and ordained, is that His people here, whether they be able to gather together with all the advantages of so doing, or whether they be scattered and isolated, shall have in them the power of His life to transcend the power of death around them.

If that is revealed as the Lord's will, let us first of all readily admit the possibility of its realization and then accept the fact that, since it is the Lord's will, it must be possible. As for you and me, let us stand in our spirit for that life expression from the risen Lord which shall transcend the death that is all around us, and which presses upon us—the evil one and the hatred of men. The Lord said: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world, but that thou shouldest keep them . . ." The power in them is the power of His risen life.

What we have been saying is so very much in accord with the fuller revelation of the Ephesian letter: "The exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all . . ." (Ephesians i. 19–21): "... to usward who believe . . ." We must stand for that strongly and definitely, because that is the testimony of the Lord Jesus.

"Justified in the spirit"! What is the Church's justification? It is that it stands on resurrection ground, manifesting resurrection life. Blessed be God, so far as our salvation is concerned, we are justified on the ground of being risen together with Christ. We take it that if we have been raised together with Him, we have been justified. God would

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never have brought us into resurrection union with Christ apart from justification. But so far as our calling, our vocation, is concerned, we are justified by the maintaining of the witness of His resurrection. That is the justification that applies to service, to instrumentalities.

“SEEN OF ANGELS”

After His resurrection He was seen of angels. We hardly need go back to the Gospels to indicate the record of the angelic attendants after His resurrection. There was the angel who rolled away the stone. There were two who sat on the stone. There were the angels who spoke of the risen Lord and told certain women exactly where they would find Him. Yes; angels saw Him after His resurrection. Now where in that connection does the Church come in? Oh, the Church is related in a wonderful way. Come again to the letter to the Ephesians and read: “To the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God” (Ephesians iii. 10). I think there is little doubt that this reference to principalities and powers includes the unfallen celestial bodies, and not only the diabolical ones. I do not know that angels of Satan need instructing about the manifold wisdom of God, but God is revealing Himself in a wonderful way to His own angel ministers by what He is doing through the Church. I cannot understand that; I cannot comprehend that; it is far beyond me. But there is the statement. It is a clear declaration that God is teaching principalities and powers concerning Himself by His activities in the Church; which means that there is a realm of spiritual intelligence, very high spiritual intelligence, angelic intelligence, receiving instruction through the Church. For what, I do not know, but it represents some tremendous values. It evidently represents something of great meaning.

Very often it may seem but poor comfort to us in times of suffering, times of trial, times of adversity, times when Satan is pressing hard, to be told that, while we can see nothing of the meaning of all this, God is instructing angels, and that principalities and powers are deriving the benefit of it all. We do not draw a great deal of comfort from that, but if we understood I think we would realise that, while we may not at such times be fulfilling a very big ministry on the earth, there is a big ministry going on towards principalities and powers through our instrumentality. Do not think that running about taking meetings, and doing work for the

Lord, is the only kind of ministry that members of the Church can fulfil. Ministry may be equally being fulfilled when these things have been brought to a standstill, and all earthly activities for the Lord are stopped, and we are in one of these painful periods of inaction. Do not conclude that because of such inaction no ministry is being rendered, or that everything of that kind is cut off at such a time. Here is the word: “. . . that NOW unto the principalities and the powers in heavenly places might be made known through the Church the manifold wisdom of God”—not in the coming age, but now. They are learning from the Lord, by reason of those very difficult and trying experiences through which the Lord is taking us, what He is doing in the Church. . . . Supposing the principalities and powers, these angelic ministers that wait upon Him, should one day come to us and thank us very much for going through that dark time, and say: ‘I came to know a lot through that. I came to understand the wisdom of God in a wonderful way through that bad time which you had.’ You would be surprised, would you not? You would say: ‘Well, I never imagined that anything could come out of that! I thought everything was dried up, and that nothing was happening at all.’ Oh, that angel minister would say: ‘You were very mistaken. I was getting a great deal of benefit out of your bad time.’ That is not a flight of imagination. Surely that is the logical outworking of a statement like this. There is a ministry that the Church fulfils which is altogether apart from platforms and meetings and the numerous kinds of activity as here amongst men. There is a mighty ministry which reaches out and touches the fringes of the universe. God is doing something out there through His dealings with the Church here. That is a ministry in which we do well to desire to be. Remember that unfallen angels know nothing in their experience of grace. Grace—marvellous grace—is something which they can only know by observing it at work.

“PREACHED AMONG THE NATIONS”

I think we need not tarry with that. The Church’s ministry is to be in all the nations, and its ministry is Christ in all the nations. Its testimony to Him is to be in all the nations.

“BELIEVED ON IN THE WORLD”

That certainly was true of the Lord Jesus. John xvii. says: “. . . the words which thou gavest me I have given unto them; and they received them,

and knew of a truth that I came forth from thee, and they believed that thou didst send me" (verse 8). He was believed on in the world.

In verse 21 we have the words: "That they may all be one . . . that the world may believe . . ." There is a believing on the part of the world as a result of His being in the Church. I am quite certain that the Church will not be believed on, or believed in, until, and unless, there is a manifestation of the spirit of Christ in mutual love. The world is put back from Christ so much by failure in that direction. While we may view the situation as hopeless in general, that does not excuse us from standing for a true testimony, and realizing that faith in the Lord Jesus will be begotten by the expression of His love amongst ourselves.

"RECEIVED UP IN GLORY"

That was true of Him, and, blessed be God, that is going to be true of His Church, His Body. I Corinthians xv. gives us a grand revelation: "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump . . ." We shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. That may not be so far ahead as many people think. It may be very soon: the sooner the better so far as His people are concerned. Our hearts really do say from their depths: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." There is no hypocrisy about that. There was a time when we used to be scared of the thought, but we have come to see that His coming is the way of all hope. This world will never see a better state, but an increasingly worse condition, until the events subsequent to, and consequent upon, His coming have taken place. There is coming an age when every evil thing will be blotted out from this cosmos. Wars shall be no more. Strife shall be no more. Hatred shall be no more. Sin shall be no more. Pain shall be no more. Sorrow and tears shall be no more. Death shall be no more. Oh, what a day! What an age! We can hardly imagine it, but our hearts surely leap at the thought of it.

Do you say you are afraid of that? Do you dread to think of that? The Lord must come for His Church first, and then things will rapidly hasten to that day. It may be a very terrible passage. Things may become very awful in the earth for a while after the Church has gone, but things will happen very rapidly, and very vividly, and move on toward that great day when He makes a new heaven and a new earth. But the day of the Church's being received up into glory is imminent. No one who

knows His Bible and has spiritual perception, or even good common-sense with the Bible before him, can fail to see that that day hastens. The counsels of men are being blown to pieces by God. They cannot hold their decisions together for a week or two. Their most solid decisions, and intentions, and agreements, fall to pieces within a short time. God is bringing the counsels of men to naught, but the counsels of God, says His Word, stand for ever. In the eternal counsels of God this is one of the things determined: ". . . we . . . shall . . . be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air . . ." (I Thessalonians iv. 17). "Received up in glory"! His end is going to be our end. The Church is going to know the counterpart of her Lord as her Head in His experience of being received up in glory.

Now, it may be that some unsaved ones have been looking in at the window and have become envious. Are you going to stand outside? Do you want to be apart from all this? Why, here is a revelation of Divine calling. Here is a presentation of the Word of God as to what it is that has been made possible for you by the Cross of the Lord Jesus, if you will believe. Are you going to let it all go? Surely you are wanting to draw near! Surely you are wanting to come in! Surely those on the fringe of things will want to be more in! Surely all of us will want to be more faithful, more devoted, in the light of that day which at longest cannot now be far off. God's Word has always been fulfilled, and proved true, and this will not break down; this will be equally true.

The Lord draw us right into the purpose of our calling! There is very much more which could be said on this matter, but we have said enough to see that the mystery of Christ is carried over into the Church which is His Body in all these respects, and that a part of the mystery—such a mystery to the men of the world, to the unbeliever, to the one who does not know spiritual secrets—is the translation of His waiting Church to meet Him ere He comes again to the earth. Translation to glory is ridiculed and ruled out as a fantastic idea by the world. But those who know the mystery of being born again; who know the mystery of being preserved and kept by Christ through the intensity of well-nigh universal opposition and antagonism; who know also that it is not in themselves at all to keep on, but that it is the Lord alone who so enables, He Himself being their very life—those of us who know these mysteries find no difficulty in accepting that extra part of the mystery related to the consummation of our lives, namely, to be caught up, received up in glory. It is a strange thing that men of the world can accept as commonplace today things which at

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one time they would have laughed at: radio, flight, television, moon visits, and all such things. Had you spoken of such things a century or two ago men would have mocked. Jules Verne was regarded as a sort of wonder man at one time, but all that he forecast has come true. Things he spoke of are

commonplace today. Men will believe these things, yet they cannot credit the translation from this earth to the presence of God of a company whom He has redeemed. We are looking for it, and we are hastening unto it, and we shall hail it with joy. The cry is in our hearts: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

(To be continued)

BALANCED CHRISTIANITY

(continued)

IV

12. Christ is God's appointed Head of a new order of mankind. Adam, the first head of the human race, disobeyed God, and dragged his whole kingdom into disorder and darkness. Christ reverses this for all who enter *His* kingdom. The Son of God was manifested on earth that He might annul the works of the devil (I John iii. 8), and set free all of Satan's slaves who long for freedom. (Hebrews ii. 14, 15.) The first man Adam is of the earth, as are all his sons: his being and life were of and for the earth, and partook of the weakness of things created. The second Man is of heaven, and, by becoming a man, He brought into human nature the authority, energy, liberty, security of the heavenly, the eternal life (John viii. 23: I Corinthians xv. 47). This life He imparts to them that obey Him.

13. Being thus appointed by God as the Head of a heavenly order of men, He is their acting Representative. It is as such that He acts as Man, and it is only that, but *all* that, which their Head has suffered, done, or received which is available for them, or properly belongs to their heavenly life. The major experiences of their Head, made possible to them by faith and obedience, are:

i. He was born into humanity by the act of the Spirit of God (Luke i. 35):

By the act of that same Spirit they are born anew into the new, heavenly race of men (John iii).

ii. He by the Spirit and by faith lived in holiness of heart and practice:

They are called to holiness, of spirit and of flesh, the inner life and the outer life, and to them the same Spirit is granted that by faith they may so walk even as Christ walked.

iii. He died unto sin once for all. On the cross He took its heavy burden upon Himself as if it had been His own. By His atoning death He put sin away as from before God, so being no more responsible for it, seeing that He discharged its full penalty, death (Romans vi):

They who rest on this His work are given by grace the benefit of it; they are deemed in law to have discharged their penalty by the act of their Surety. Thus they have peace with God, and are called to regard themselves as having died with their Representative (Romans vi: Colossians ii and iii).

iv. He was raised from the dead and was removed in Manhood to that heavenly world whence He had come:

They are seen by God as being where their Representative is, on the same principle that a party to a suit is deemed to have appeared in court in the person of his advocate. The Spirit of Christ is imparted to His people to make this effective in their present experience of heart. Thus do they know and feel themselves citizens of *that* world (Ephesians i. 15—ii. 10: Philippians iii. 20).

v. He lived and lives in the full consciousness of His eternal Sonship to God:

They are given the spirit of adoption that they also may know God as their Father, and may feel and act harmoniously with this their high calling (Romans viii. 12-17: Galatians iii. 23-iv. 7).

vi. He was the Light of this world, as He had ever been of that world above; and therefore the Prince of darkness hated, persecuted, and slew Him:

They, in His absence, are called and enabled to be the light of the world, and as such are granted the privilege to suffer with Him (John viii. 12: Matthew v. 14-16: Philippians ii. 14-18; i. 27-30).

vii. He is to be the Sovereign of heaven and earth, actually, visibly, in glory:

They who share His cross shall share His throne; if we suffer with Him we shall be glorified together with Him (Romans viii. 17: II Timothy ii. 11-13).

V

14. Two great principles are involved in the Christian life, referred to earlier as objective and subjective.

The objective outlook is that which dwells upon what Christ Himself is: what He is to the Father, what He did for us in His great work of redemption, and our eternal security as brought through Him into the family of God. The danger here is not of an over-appreciation of Christ, for this is impossible. It lies in our resting in our standing or our faith, satisfied that all is well because we are told that none can snatch us out of His hand.

The fault here is that the heart is not engrossed with the person of Christ, that He is not the Object of affection. It is to be feared that in many cases (most particularly in children brought up in Christian homes) there has not been deep exercise of heart as to sin, and consequently there is little just appreciation of the magnitude of the salvation effected by the Lord and no saying in heart: "I will arise and go to *my Father*." Thus there is no real enjoyment of the Father's home as the sweet present abode of the soul, and there is lacking the normal reaction of walking with God in glad and humble subjection to His holy will, with the happiness of heart which this brings. Is not this why many souls are spiritually at a stand-still, accompanied often by much worldliness and a marred testimony to Christ?

15. The subjective aspect deals with our actual present state, as distinct from our standing in

Christ. Its importance lies in its effects upon our actions. It is introduced in such exhortations as: "Abide in me and I in you . . . Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit . . . I exercise myself always to have a conscience void of offence . . . the kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

The danger is not in over-stressing such passages of Scripture but in building a theory of sanctification on isolated texts, especially when the mind is occupied too largely with oneself, looking inward, emphasising a daily dying. Such souls do not realise that a dead person cannot die. The Word says: "*Ye died*, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians iii. 3). Our part is to reckon one *is* dead, and then, by the power of the Spirit, *to make to die* the sinful *doings* formerly done through the body, and which the old nature would gladly continue (Romans viii. 13).

16. Thus as regards the experimental realisation of our possible privileges, so as to enjoy them in one's own soul, there are two chief perils.

i. There are such as rest content with assent to the objective historical facts as to Christ, and receive little or no corresponding subjective inward experience.

ii. There are others so engrossed with their inward subjective condition that they give too little regard to the facts as to Christ.

For example:

(a) Some acknowledge Jesus to be the Son of God and to have made by His death atonement for sin, and here they leave the matter. They neither know nor seek peace with God.

(b) Others moan and groan because of their sins, fear the wrath of God, long for peace of conscience, strive to be good and to do good, diligently practice religious ceremonies, pray perpetually for pardon as "miserable offenders", but make no spiritual progress. Nor will they ever do so until they turn the mind from self to rest upon the objective facts concerning Christ, and what God, in His Word of truth, states as to those facts. Upon doing this they will have assured peace. The subjective state must rest upon the objective facts. Otherwise any sense of peace, if any be reached, will prove baseless and deceptive.

(c) Others are satisfied with theoretical acceptance of their presumed position and blessing in Christ, and pay too little attention to their inward state and their practice. Assent to the objective facts contents them, if contentment it can be called: they are not much distressed that their inward experience is earthly, worldly, unheavenly, or they take the dope that this cannot be bettered till they

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

“get to heaven”. They may even deserve the rebuke: “Thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked” (Revelation iii. 17). Thus may the soul beguile itself by saying it has all in Christ. As if holding title deeds dispensed with obtaining possession.

(d) Yet others think they have made much progress in inward holiness and are *in themselves* free from sin. To themselves their subjective state is satisfactory. They have not weighed that God does *not* say that our “old man” is crucified in *us*, but that it *was* crucified in *Christ* at the cross.* Because they think they stand, these are ever liable to fall; and many do fall, sometimes to a lower moral depth than in their unregenerate days, and into despair. The objective did not underpin the subjective, and the latter collapsed.

(e) Some will speak (not to say *sing*) with complacency about being children of God the Father, yet, as if orphans cast upon this cruel world, they worry daily as to food, clothes, and the possible troubles of tomorrow. The subjective condition of mind is not yet rectified by the relationship avowed.

(f) Others talk of sitting in the heavenlies in Christ, but experimentally know nothing of His authority over the powers of darkness, those wicked spirits that Christ has defeated, but who still defeat these easy-going Christians by inducing absorption in this earth and conduct very unheavenly. Happy is he of whom that can be said which one said of R. C. Chapman: “We talk about the heavenly places, but *he lives in them.*”

(g) But others are dreadfully and rightly alarmed at defeat, and they muster all their own energies for the daily conflict; yet unavailingly, because they do not see that *we* can get *nothing* except what our Head has gained, and that we come to share in His victory and authority by resting upon and appropriating Him as revealed and offered in God’s Word.

17. These instances suffice to illuminate spiritual life. They all reveal the fundamental principles:

i. That only what the Head is, has done, and is doing is available for man: but that *all* that the Head is ought to be the personal experience of His members.

ii. That the Holy Spirit of power makes experimental what faith accepts, and no more than faith accepts, upon the basis of the promises of God, the obedience of faith proving it to be genuine faith.

* Romans vi. 6. The “is” of the Authorized Version is wholly indefensible and very misleading. It is the past tense, as Revised Version.

“Arise and walk,” said Christ to a man who could not walk. Faith at once obeyed, and strength to walk was instantly granted.

18. It is balance that is needed. The mystic dwells disproportionately upon inward experience. His tendency is to be ever regarding God within. This advances easily to a pantheistic identifying of God and self, and may lead on to the virtual worship of “the divine in man”, which is self worship, a phase of the bait offered at Eden—“ye shall become as God”.

On the other hand, the believer may be a credal formalist, accepting all the facts declared by the Father concerning the Son, agreeing to all the derived doctrines, but experiencing little of their living power to cleanse the heart from sin and to cause Christ to dwell there to be our life, displacing the old self life.

It is balance that is indispensable. There must be the conscious, persistent, unconditional acceptance of, dependence upon, and expectation from Christ, the historic Christ. He must be the Object of confidence and affection; the Satisfier of the soul; its Saviour from disorder, corruption, unregulated desires; the One sanctified in the heart as LORD. Then the Spirit of Christ can cause the thoughts, feelings, decisions to be derived from and to centre in Christ, the Man who in person is at the right hand of God, but who is thus developed morally in the believer on earth by His moral features growing progressively in the Christian’s character and walk.

19. Christ is God’s Deliverer for the world: this is God’s method of deliverance. He gives us in Christ a new centre, and the wheel of life runs truly and smoothly because it is truly centred. But because Christ is the centre of the whole kingdom of God, in heaven and on earth, the life that is centred in Him is thereby in harmony with God and all His kingdom, the world of order, harmony, peace, joy, the world where one will alone prevails, the will of God and which is therefore eternal (I John ii. 17).

But for the same reason such a life is ec-centric, out of centre, with that portion of the universe, heavenly and earthly, not centred in Christ. If two sets of powerful machinery were at work in the same space, there would arise friction, clash, damage. In this age, this situation induces conflict of spirit and practical trouble for the Christ-centred man. But he can endure with patience and confidence, seeing that he knows that Christ has conquered this world, and that His world, the heavenly, will prevail finally.

Christ is God’s Saviour for the individual and for the world: association with Him, by faith and

obedience, is God's method of salvation. There is no other, nor can there be. John iii. 35, 36.

“Christ! I am Christ's! and let the name suffice you;
Ay, for me, too, He greatly hath sufficed.
Lo, with no winning words I would entice you:

Paul has no honour and no friend but Christ.”
The all-inclusive doctrine and power of the true life is: “Ye died with Christ . . . ye were raised with Christ . . . Christ is our life . . . seek the things that are above, where Christ is” (Colossians iii. 1-4).
G. H. L.

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

UNWELCOME VOICES

MR. SIMPLE lived too near to Crystal Palace. Not that this had ever seemed to matter, except that some days when he went into his garden he was worried by the whine and roar of racing cars on the circuit there. What began the trouble was the tape-recording instrument which was given him. That made him aware of some very unwelcome sounds.

His first use of his tape-recorder was to make copies of recordings of some special Easter messages which had been given in his church. This he did by playing them from another machine which he had borrowed and recording the messages directly into his own instrument. When he had finished, he sent the tapes off to two interested friends and returned the originals. So far he had not needed to use the microphone at all.

He soon had to use it, though, for he had been asked to record a few short talks for blind people, so one Saturday afternoon he put a new tape into the machine, set up the microphone on the table, and began to talk into it as the tape slowly revolved. The first message, with a brief closing prayer, took about twenty minutes. He stopped the machine, ran the tape back again, then set it off and sat back to listen to his recording.

Of course his voice sounded strange to him; he expected this and was not surprised. What did surprise him, however, was to hear another voice talking at the same time, then another, and then several voices. He had thought that the tape was a new one! He had also thought that in any case old recordings are automatically rubbed off with a new recording. Had he been wrong?

Poor Mr. Simple! He tried several times over, but each time there were these other voices. One of them was talking about “Brand's Hatch” and

the other seemed to be discussing the World Cup. It was no good! He had to give up the attempt to record his message.

Next week a friend who had received the Easter tapes wrote to say that they were quite useless, since the messages were drowned by other voices. Now Mr. Simple had not even used the microphone to prepare these tapes, which he was sure were new ones, so this puzzled him all the more. Then the other friend also wrote about the Easter tapes. He was not so downright and even said some nice things about the messages, but at the same time he made it plain that they were very difficult to understand. “Next time you record,” he wrote, “make sure that the TV set is not working in another room.” This puzzled Mr. Simple even more, for he had no TV set in the house.

Perhaps by now some readers will have realized what was happening. As I have said, Mr. Simple lived too near to Crystal Palace. Every time his machine was set to record it took in the TV commentary from the station there and included it on the tape. No wonder those messages were difficult to understand! It was all due to the strange and unwelcome voices which were coming over the air and registering themselves on the tape.

When he realized the truth Mr. Simple sat down to think out how he could conquer this “invasion” of his home. If he moved to another house it might solve the problem, but he could not do this. He had an idea that if he could completely encircle his recorder with a copper screen that would keep out the invisible waves. The high price of copper and of the workmanship made this quite impossible. There remained only one remedy. He would have to do his recording before B.B.C. 1 was on the air. This was the only way.

And for Christians who want to hear God speaking to them it is also the only way to hear His voice clearly. There is a hymn which says:

“Often through my heart is pealing
Many another voice than Thine,
Many an unwilling echo stealing
From the walls of this Thy shrine.”

In the case of Mr. Simple the voices were certainly unwilling, and they were unwelcome, too, for they spoiled the messages which he needed to hear.

How true this is for us all! It was not that there was anything wrong with the Sports' Commentaries

which the tapes picked up, but the trouble was that they blurred and drowned the true messages. Like Mr. Simple, we cannot free ourselves from such voices by moving away. Nor can we live in insulated chambers cut off from the rest of the world. What then can we do? We must be sure to give God the first place. We must take care to listen to Him before the other voices start, and before the world can get at us. We must seek Him early. We must give Him the priority. This is what the Psalmist did—“O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee” (Psalm 63.1).

H. F.

THE WILL OF GOD IN RELATION TO HIS PEOPLE

2. THE LAW OF RENUNCIATION

“Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a bondservant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians ii. 5-11).

“Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ, and be found in him, not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Philippians iii. 8, 9).

“By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to be evil entreated with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; accounting the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt” (Hebrews xi. 24-26).

IN this message we shall be occupied with the realization of the Lord's full will, unto which He has called us. We have already considered that great law of realization and fulfilment, the law of the government of the Word of God. We were able only just to touch the very fringe of that matter, and I can only trust that it at least introduced you to a new consideration, and that, because of that emphasis, you will have a much closer and more devoted regard for the Word of God in every matter of your life. All those who have been of service to the Lord to others have been people of the Word, and not just of the letter of the Word, but of heart relationship with the Word of God. All who have in any way fulfilled the function of spiritual leadership, like Joshua, have, as we saw, been based so strongly and utterly upon the Word of God. It has been like that all the way through, but the greatest Servant of all, the Lord Jesus, was meticulously careful that in everything He moved according to the Word. The Scriptures had such a place in His whole life, conduct, teaching and work, that He became known as “the Word of God”. The Word is not only something written in a book. It has to become personal, personified in life, in character, and in every way if we are going to be of use to others, to be able to fulfil any responsibility at all like those men in the beginning of the Church in

Jerusalem and in Antioch, who were men who waited on God for His Word. They did not organize the Church, nor did they decide upon programmes, plans and schemes. They never introduced anything until they had waited upon the Lord for His Word about it, asking: 'Is this according to what is revealed?' That is the only way of the growth of the Church and its building up.

Well, as you see, that opens a very large door, but we are not going any further with that matter. I just re-emphasize that a binding law of spiritual progress in the individual life, in the church life, local and universal, is the absolute government of the Word of God, to the law and to the testimony. If it is not according thereto, then there will be a hidden peril in it.

So we go on now to another law of this progress in the will of God unto its ultimate realization. We must remember that we are called unto this. It is inherent in our calling, and not something extra to the Christian life, nor something optional in the Christian life. It is fundamental, intrinsic, in the Christian life. So is what we are going to say now about another law of the will and purpose of God in our calling, and it is what is presented to us in the Scriptures which we selected for this purpose out of many others and what I am going to call 'the law of renunciation'.

THE GREAT RENUNCIATION

In Philippians ii. the Lord Jesus is presented to us in terms of the great renunciation. He was equal with God, but, as the margin says, He regarded that not as something to be grasped, or held on to, tenaciously gripped, but He "emptied himself". He made the great renunciation in heaven.

The Apostle Paul has caught that mind, which he exhorts Christians to have. He has seen the point! It came to him in the great encounter with the Lord at the beginning of his Christian life. He saw, and then all the other things, however great they were—and they were many and they were great, as he tells us in that Letter to the Philippians—lost their grip on him, because something else had a grip on him, and he says that he made the great renunciation, perhaps not in the same dimension as the Lord Jesus, but for him it was everything, as it was for the Lord. Our everything may not be as great as was the Lord's everything, but if it is everything, well, that is full and final. Paul says that he counted all these things, this catalogue of advantages which were his by birth, by upbringing, by training and by acquirement, as refuse. He renounced them all. And by the great renunciation

of his Master and of himself the Church has benefited through all these generations—and that is the point we have to come to before long.

Then we read of Moses, though we could have mentioned many others in that chapter xi. of Hebrews. We picked out Moses, who renounced all that he had in Egypt, the learning of the Egyptians, the court of Pharaoh, and all the advantages that were there. He made the great renunciation. Why? Again, because of the people of God.

THE DISTORTION OF GOOD INTO EVIL

Now, that is the point, but before we come to its application, let me remind you that one of the clear marks and traces of the devil and his handiwork is the distortion of good into evil, of good things made into bad things. Satan *creates* nothing, for he is not a creator, but he attempts to turn what has been made for good into bad. Hence you have a whole list of paradoxes in the Bible, and it is fascinating to follow them through, but I am not going to do so. I will just give you a hint. There is a whole list of paradoxes, of seeming contradictions, and they are in this realm of good things in Divine intention turned into bad things.

Take the matter of ambition. Ambition indeed is the parent of many evils. Look at what ambition in the world leads to! There are so many ambitious men and women who, to realize their ambition, will tread upon all principles and will ride roughshod over all sensibilities. Ambition is a driving force to get, to be, to master, to dominate, to rule, and have we not in our lifetime seen something of that? My, these ambitious people whose names we could mention, who have thrown the world into the most distressing and awful state! Literally multitudes have been murdered for one man's ambition! We need not dwell upon it, but that is what ambition can be, and it has come into the Church of God. Men, as Peter calls it, "lording it" over God's heritage, wanting to be something in the Church, and to have power. They are just fulfilling some secret ambition, and perhaps do not mean it or realize it, but others do.

Well, here is something that is evil, *but* God created ambition! It is a Divine thing. Our translations do not help us too much in this, but Paul said: "We make it *our ambition* . . . to be well-pleasing unto Him" (II Cor. v. 9—R.V. margin). Paul, you have redeemed a bad word! You have salvaged something that has gone astray, that the devil has captured and turned to his own use, for it was ambition in Satan before his fall that led to that fall, and he, like a serpent, has injected that

poison into human nature. Surely we should keep that word 'ambition' out of the sacred language? No! It is something Divine.

We could go on with a whole lot of paradoxes and contradictions like that. Paul gave us a list in one place: "As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing all things" (II Corinthians vi. 10). Those are paradoxes, are they not?

Here, in this very chapter, Philippians, ii., and in this very consideration of the great renunciation, we are in the presence of one of these things which have been distorted. Satan has taken hold of something that God created and put into man and into His universe. What is it? The desire to acquire, to possess, to have. It is not wrong in itself to have, to acquire, to possess. Do you not have many battles over this very matter, whether you ought to have this, and whether it is right to possess that? In your very nature there are the traces of this Divine thing, this acquisitiveness. Yes, God put that in. The Bible is full of it. We were looking at Israel earlier, and what a lot the Lord said to them about 'having'! 'I will bring you into a land flowing with milk and honey, and this is for you to *have*. I mean you to have it, to be a wealthy people. It is all for you. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon I have given to you.'

Over against that there is the great renunciation. Is that a contradiction? Renunciation is a law of having—the Lord Jesus let go, and He was given. He renounced, and was endowed with all the fullness of heaven.

Satan, then, uses this Divine thing, twists something which is of God and is quite right in its own nature, and gives it this distortion to make it an evil thing, so that in this world now we have this terrible assertiveness, this wanting to get control, to possess, to have.

WHAT IS IT FOR?

The answer to that question is the answer to the paradox. What do you want it for? And, you see, it is just there that the enemy has done his work by introducing the selfhood power, this drawing to self, having for self, holding for self, prizing it for self. So when we read: "He emptied *himself*", there is the whole story of redemption in the emptying of self, and of the wonderful issue in this universe along the line of the redemption—what man is going to have by God's gift and what we may have now by His gift in a spiritual way. Every blessing of the spirit in the heavenlies in Christ and the fullness into which we are called in the will of God

comes along the line of the conversion of self, this turning round from self to God.

Now please do not let that principle work wrongly! This is where Peter slipped up, because he was not converted at the time. I know I am going to be challenged on this, for I have been, but there is a real sense in which Peter was not converted until the Day of Pentecost. We will not argue that out, and you can say what you like about it, but when the Lord came with the basin of water and the towel to Peter in order to wash his feet, Peter said: "Thou shalt never wash my feet!" Then the Lord said: "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me" (John xiii. 8). 'Oh, well', said Peter, 'I want the part.' Do you see the point? In a very few hours after that it was proved that it was really Peter who was in view, who wanted all that he could get, even of Divine things. And when I say that you will get a great fullness if only you will learn the lesson of renunciation, be careful as to your ambition for fullness! *Who is it for? What is it for?* Is it for self, or is it for the Lord?

GOD'S VINDICATION IN THE CREATION OF MAN

The principle lying behind Philippians ii. is just this: The Lord Jesus let go of all that He had of heavenly glory and equality with God, not for Himself, for it was His already and there was nothing whatever that He need do to enhance His own position and rights, but for the vindication of God in the creation of man. God created man and took a tremendous responsibility in doing so. Have you not often felt bad about this? Oh, some of your natures are better than mine, but sometimes I have been tempted to think: "Was God justified in creating man, collectively as he is today?" I think of the history of man, and, really, it hardly bears thinking about! But God did it. He took the risk and the responsibility of making you and making me. I have to turn that back on the Lord sometimes and say: 'Lord, You made me! You gave me a being! It was by Your law that I came into being! It was Your responsibility!' Well, that is helpful sometimes, but we will leave it.

God had got to be vindicated in His creative responsibility, and, therefore, He had to save this man that He had made. Further, He had to be glorified in this man, and there is no salvation and no glorification while man is a selfish creature. Selfishness spoils everything and robs of all glory everywhere. Therefore that deep thing had to be touched and dealt with, not theoretically, not doctrinally, not theologically, but actually, and there is no way of dealing with anything *actually*

except by taking it and destroying it in your own person and work, and being the opposite yourself by a mighty, deep work of God. So the motive that led the Lord Jesus to the great renunciation, the letting go, was the vindication of God, the justification of creation and the making possible of man coming to that glory in fellowship with the Father in heaven for ever. It was outward, first for His Father's vindication, and secondly for man's redemption from that twist that the devil had brought in and by which so much mischief had been made. It was your salvation and mine from some *thing* that the devil had planted in the race which was a contradiction to what God meant. All that was outward, and not for the Lord Jesus Himself.

Now read His life again. All that is included in this description in Philippians ii: 'He emptied Himself . . . He humbled Himself . . . He took the form of a bondsman . . . He was found in fashion as a man . . . He became obedient unto death'—and the most shameful and ignominious form of death that the world has ever known! It has always been known that crucifixion is the worst form of death possible. But He went right down to that! That is letting go of self and all self-interest, is it not? That is renunciation! And all that was for the Father first, and was why He was always speaking on this earth of 'My Father . . . My Father'. It was for the vindication of the Father, and for the redemption of man unto glory, the transformation and transfiguration of humanity.

OUR RENUNCIATION

Now, dear friends, you and I are in the way of this. Have you not noticed that the Lord's dealings with us when He gets us in hand, when He really does get a purchase upon us, are along this line? Again and again in the course of our Christian experience we come up against a situation where it is: 'Are we going to hold on or let go?' Are we going to let go? Can we let go? Can we really renounce? We are stuck until that is settled! We just cannot get past it. It may be an incident in our life, or it may be what we might call a small thing in comparison with other things, but there it is. 'Must I let go? Shall I keep hold? Shall I get this bone between my teeth and worry it to death, and not let it go?' I must repeat: there is no way on until that thing is settled.

Have you not, on the other hand, experienced what it means when at last, having sought the grace of God, you let go and say to Him: 'All right, Lord, my hands are off. I am not just resigning.' Be

careful about becoming resigned to your fate! That is not the will of God. There must not be a negative or passive attitude, but a positive one: 'Lord, if this is what You want, You have it, and I believe You have a purpose in bringing me to this position of letting go, of renouncing.' When we get there something breaks in, and all that we had been wanting we get! It is strange that it works like that, but what about Abraham and Isaac? Could Abraham not have held on? Could he not have argued with God? Could he not have supported his tenacity about Isaac by reminding the Lord of what He had said? Oh, yes, he could have built up a tremendous argument against offering Isaac, but he came to the point of the great renunciation. He let go to God, and what did he get? He not only got Isaac back, but he got a nation! "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Genesis xxii. 18). It was from inward to outward.

You see the range, the tremendous potential of renunciation? We have picked Moses out from all those mentioned in Hebrews xi., and he could have argued with the Lord on the ground of sovereignty: 'Well, Lord, Your sovereignty ordered that when all the babes were being slaughtered I was spared, and that girl of Pharaoh's came along that day. It was in Your sovereignty that I was rescued and taken right *into* the palace and brought up in Pharaoh's house, educated according to the wisdom of the Egyptians. Your sovereignty was in this!' But the point was—he left it all, and it was a big 'all'. He renounced it all. Why? Because he had become converted, not in the New Testament sense, perhaps, but converted. He turned round, inward, to people: His race, the people of God, were, as we know, on his heart: "Choosing rather to be evil entreated with the people of God"—and there you have his motive: the people of God. 'What *I* may lose does not matter so long as the people of God get the benefit and the blessing.'

Do you see the point? Christ was repeating Himself in these men's lives on the one principle of renunciation; and because He, the Son of God, made the great renunciation, "*wherefore*"—and what a 'wherefore'!—"God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on the earth"—and here is a peculiarity—"and things under the earth". You know, things like that are said quite often in the Bible, but the third dimension, "things under the earth", is left out on other occasions when the heavens and the earth are mentioned. I will leave that for you to think about! But in *this* case the underworld is also going to bow to Him! His

renunciation means that the full dimensions of the universe are affected. What a range is affected by the ability to let go unto God!

I think I hardly need say more than that. To let go is one of the most difficult things that you and I have to learn! The Lord Jesus was "meek and lowly in heart", and meekness is just selflessness, the outward aspect of life. Not having things for ourselves, but thinking how much others can gain if we have to lose them, and if by *our* loss the Father can gain what He ought to have and the people whom He has created may be benefited.

THE LAW OF ENLARGEMENT

That is the law of enlargement. You noticed that I stopped short in the reading from Hebrews xi. about Moses at a certain point, because I am always afraid of this wretched self-interest of ours! It is always there, and ready to pounce upon anything. I did not read: "He looked unto the recompense of reward." The Lord has promised enlargement along the line of renunciation and loss, but we should not be motivated by reward, should we? No servant of the Lord should be motivated by what he is going to get out of his service. "When ye shall have done all the things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants." Nevertheless, we can put a right and proper emphasis upon it because of where we started. Are you following the train of thought? It is God's will for you, for me, for mankind, to be enlarged with all His fullness, to have *all* that He can give, but not selfishly, not for our own use, but for His glory, His vindication; and if you and I get to glory and He is able to give us then of His fullness, endow us with heavenly riches, I am quite sure that we will have found in the discipline of renunciation the right ground upon which to be rewarded. You see, anyone who has really been through this, has been right in that deep and desperate reality of facing the loss of some *thing*, some possession, something which meant very much to them, indeed, it might be everything to them, might have made or marred their lives, for they have been faced with the question of willingness to let go unto the Lord. It has meant devastation to selfhood, to ambition, but when that devastation has taken place and we come out on the other side, it is all right. There is no battle now, for it is done, and then the Lord has His ground for rewarding, for giving. It is safe for Him to do it.

I wonder how many of you, especially you servants of the Lord, whoever you are, have sometimes said to the Lord: 'Lord, can You trust me with

this? Can You trust me with that blessing? Can you really trust me to do this for You? I know my own heart. I know its pride, its acquisitiveness, its love of place, position, influence, and so on, and I am afraid that if You do bless, I may, all subtly, take some gratification to myself. Can You trust me?'

The Lord is working to get us to the place, dear friends, where He can trust us with eternal, heavenly responsibility, and He knows when that deep, evil thing in our nature has been dealt with by the discipline of renunciation. It is very true to spiritual life, is it not?

There are so many tensions! Are we not suffering in this life from nervous tensions and strains? Yes! But what is many a nervous breakdown and a lot of this wrong kind of intensity that does us so much harm, nervously and physically, due to? Not getting what we want! We are not having what we have set our heart upon! God is not giving it to us, or doing it for us, and so we get into this state of tension, strain, in life. Life becomes a strain, and even the Christian life becomes a terrible strain. If you do not know anything about that you are a very fortunate person, but it is true for us all. We meet people everywhere who are under strain. You can see it in their faces. And what is the matter? They have not learnt to let go to God. We know, by experiences that we have had, that when we have come to the place where we let go to the Lord (and I am very particular about saying 'letting go *to the Lord!*'), a wonderful calm comes, wonderful rest and wonderful peace. The battle is over and the strain has gone. That is very true.

The great renunciation made by the Lord Jesus was that He identified Himself with fallen man. Temptation has no meaning at all if there is not something to work upon, and so when the devil came to Him in the wilderness and offered Him the kingdoms of the world, it was no temptation if He had no heart for the kingdoms of the world and could say: 'You can have them. I am not interested in them. The kingdoms of the world do not matter to me at all.' There would be no temptation, would there? But if the kingdoms of this world were the very object for which He had come, there is a temptation, and a subtle one, appealing to the soul life. The Son of Man became identified with man, knowing quite well the temptations of man and man's natural ambition. He was tempted in *all* points as we are, sin apart, but He conquered. How? Not by saying: 'I am not a bit interested in that. That is no temptation to Me!' But by saying: 'I am going to have the kingdoms of this world, but not at your hands, Satan! Not by your gift, and

not along your line. I am going to the Cross, and there I will destroy you and get the kingdoms on a proper ground.' So He came in the likeness of man, knowing man's temptations, without the sinful nature, yet with a human soul which can have ambition for itself or for God. In that temptation, then, it was the Father and every word that the Father had spoken which came first. The battleground was: 'Not for Me, but for the Father and for others.'

I wonder if you have followed me? I think we are touching things that are very real in the spiritual life! This whole matter of the Lord's identification with us was in order to save us, and to save us from our selfhood, our self-towardness, by conversion, turning God-ward. The life of a Christian, then, is simply the life which is for God. We are tested on that so often, and when we get through we come to

rest, to peace, to quietness. The battle is over—until the next time! But that is the way we grow. The next time will be more severe, I am sorry to say, but when you go into it you have learnt something. You do not go into the more severe without the knowledge of what it means, and you are able to say: 'Oh, well, I had something like this before, and I have learned how to get through by the grace of God. This is a bit more difficult, but it is the same principle. I am not going to fight for my own way, nor for my own interests. I am not going to exercise this bulldog disposition of mine to get hold of this and not let go, but I am going to be ready to put it on the altar for God.' The solution comes that way. It is the law of renunciation in progress toward Divine fullness. . . . The Lord give us understanding and help from His Word!

(To be continued)

REMEMBERING AND FORGETTING

Reading: Deuteronomy viii.

"And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God hath led thee . . ."

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

THOU shalt remember . . ." "Forgetting the things which are behind . . ." Remembering and forgetting!

In these two passages, which look like a contradiction (though we shall see that they are not), we have, firstly, an exhortation to grateful recollection: "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God hath led thee." Then there is an exhortation to profitable résumé—gathering up the lessons for the future. And, finally, an exhortation to purposeful resolve: "Forgetting . . . I press on toward the goal."

In both places, Deuteronomy and Philippians, we have one particular point of likeness and similarity: they both mark a point of transition, or,

if you like, of crisis. In the former case, a big change was about to take place, and all that Moses said, as you have read in this long chapter, was said in relation to that transition.

There was about to take place a change in leadership, which involved a change from a period of deep and drastic preparation, from a phase of pioneering the way and laying the foundations for the future, to a time of proving the value of all that had been and of taking up responsibility by means of it. It was a transition from a period of child-training, or what is called chastening, discipline, to the possession of the inheritance and an exercise of stewardship.

If you gather all those features together, you will see quite clearly that they represent the stages and phases of any normal Christian experience. A true Christian life or pilgrimage should be marked by those characteristics; it has its stages, which are Divinely-appointed economies for these different phases of the Christian life. At one time, certain things obtain, and are the governing, outstanding and quite conspicuous ways of the Lord. The time comes when these lose, or pass from, their particular place of prominence, and other things take their place. But within those changing economies there

are always these two things that I have mentioned—preparation and fulfilment, or responsibility. There is the laying down of a ground, the providing by God of experience, of instruction, and then comes the point at which all that is going to be put to the test as to its real meaning to those concerned; and it will be put to the test as they are forced into the way of new responsibility.

It may be that this is the experience of an individual, and it very often is, for most of us can see the stages and phases of our Christian life as we have moved on through various crises, going from one phase to another. It may be true of a company of the Lord's people. It may be true of the whole Church. And at such a time, when the Lord brings us face to face with the issues of all that has been in the light of a new day, with its new demands and new responsibilities, there is a great value in remembrance. At such a time the Lord says: "Thou shalt remember."

There are two sides to the remembrance, or recollection. There is the human side. That is here in this chapter: "All the way which the Lord thy God hath led thee these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble thee, to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no." It was not, as we have often said, that the Lord did not know what was in their heart, and had to put them into situations to discover it, but more correctly: "That He might make thee know." The later statement about the basis of man's subsistence—"that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only"—can well govern this earlier statement: "To make thee know what was in thine heart." That is an essential uncovering and disclosure if there is going to be all that the Lord intends, and it is certainly the most painful experience, or part of life, when, under the hand of God, by His dealings, by His ways, by His methods and by His means with us we come more and more desperately to recognise what kind of people we really are. There is such disillusionment about ourselves if we were ever at all proud or self-sufficient, if we had any opinion of ourselves, or thought that we were anything. But this devastating uncovering of our true selves as God sees and knows them, while it is perhaps the most terrible aspect of a life under His hand, is absolutely essential to the purpose of God. There is no doubt about that; and there is no doubt that that is one of the things that the Lord does with a life when He gets it into His hands. Sooner or later He lays that life bare to itself so that it has no confidence in the flesh whatever. "To make thee know what was in

thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or not.' And what was the verdict upon the forty years in the wilderness? It was 'No!' They were not capable of doing it in themselves, and they proved to themselves and to everybody else that it was not in them to do it. 'And thou shalt remember that!'

Too easily, in the day of blessing, as the chapter goes on to show, we forget that work of humbling, of emptying, of breaking, which the Lord did as a part of the very foundation of everything. That is human nature, how we are made, so the word comes with tremendous emphasis: "Thou shalt remember." There are very many of those phrases with God: "Thou shalt . . . thou shalt . . .!", and this is one of His imperatives: "Thou shalt remember!" You must keep in mind always that the foundation of everything is your own unworthiness of anything at all. You will never, never come to appreciate all the grace and mercy of God, all His goodness and kindness, His patience, His longsuffering and His forbearance (of which the forty years are such a history) unless you have come to realise what Paul, said of himself, that 'in me, that is, in my flesh dwelleth no good thing. There is no merit for this in me.' Thou shalt remember that side!

But then, over against the human side of self-discovery, so much weakness, so much failure, so much shame and breaking down, there is the Divine side. Oh, what a story of faithfulness on God's part! The faithfulness of God is magnified as the true nature of man is revealed under His hand. "Thou shalt remember . . ." that, while it was true that you could not be relied upon, depended upon, at all, that you failed at every point of testing and of trying, and that you proved yourself to be utterly worthless under every trial, God did not give you up; God did not abandon you; God did not wash His hands of you. He remained faithful. "The Lord, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in loving-kindness" is written large on the, so to speak, Divine banner over all the tribes for forty years. "Thou shalt remember . . . His infinite patience, His infinite long-suffering!" This is the foundation, and is, as I have said, necessary whenever it is the Lord's purpose to lead into something more of His glory and honour. It is a work of bringing home two things: that we are not *the* people, and better than any others; and that God is infinitely merciful to the poorest stuff of humanity.

THE FORWARD LOOK

Paul, in the passage in Philippians, is also at a point of transition. As we know, when he wrote that

letter he was in prison. He felt that the time of his departure was at hand, and he did not know from day to day whether he would be led out to his death. He had hopes that there might be an extending, but he was writing as though the end was very near. So it was a time of transition for him and for the churches. The leadership was changing, and all that had come in by way of the pioneering, the foundation-laying, the teaching and the training, was now to give place to the proof of its value by those to whom it had been given.

Paul knew that his course was run: 'I have finished my course; I have kept the faith', and yet for him it was not the end by any means. I think it was very wonderful that Paul did not close down at that point and say: 'This is the end!' Instead, it was: 'Even if I have only got another hour, another day, another week, *I press on*. I am not closing down now; I am going on!' And why? Because as Moses had done, he had seen far, far more ahead than ever had been before, far more than that which lay behind, and because that which lay ahead far outweighed all that he had come into thus far, even after all those years.

You see, these are the two great lessons of life. Where does hope lie? Negatively, you have to say: 'Well, looking at myself, as I now see myself in the light of God's uncovering of everything, I have to say: "There is no hope there! There is no hope in me! I have proved that I am hopeless in this realm of things."' And that is what Paul was referring to when he said: 'Forgetting . . .' What was it about which he said: 'Forget . . .'? Look at the chapter again and you will see. It was all the things in which there was no hope. He was recounting those things which, he said, '*were* gain to me' in the old life, all the things that made up this world for him in the past, and was saying: 'I have come to see that these things were no ground of hope at all. I have come to see that, though I may have had everything to which people in this world aspire, things that men are ambitious to get, there is no hope at all in them.' That is the great lesson of life, on the one side—to discover where there is no hope and to leave it. Leave the hopeless ground! Forget it! Oh, for this grace of forgetfulness, in this matter at any rate! Forgetfulness is a great trouble to some of us as we get older. But here is something which we are bidden to forget.

And on the other side, of course, we have to learn where hope lies. What is the ground of hope? And here Paul is but the counterpart of Moses. Moses is bringing into view the land—the wonderful land flowing with milk and honey, with all its wealth, all its fruitfulness, all its depth and fulness.

All that was in view. And now today we know that all that was but a prophetic pointer to the spiritual. We have heard hundreds of times, perhaps, that that land depicts, typically, Christ, the 'heavenly country'; Christ, in whom all the fulness dwells. Hear Moses talking about the riches and wealth in the land, and then hear Paul crying: "O the depth of the riches . . .!" Oh, the fulness he had seen in Christ! The land and Christ are part and counterpart. Where is the hope to deliver Moses and Israel from despair? It lies in Christ: "Christ in you the hope of glory." What is the hope with Paul? Well, his outlook was not too inspiring, you know. He had many things that made up a ground of very real depression: 'All they that be in Asia be turned from me', and then he mentioned different ones who had left him. And then, looking at himself in his situation, it was not too inspiring from the natural point of view. He was shut up in prison, tied to his chain, and reduced to pen and paper, but he was not for a moment cast down or depressed. Why? Because he had seen how much more there is in the Lord Jesus than he had ever attained unto. Christ is bigger than it all. His Christ is bigger than everything, bigger than all the accumulated discouragements, so he says: 'I have counted everything as loss, as refuse, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him . . .'.—"Forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things that are before, I press on towards the goal unto the prize of the on-high calling of God in Christ Jesus." There is the hope, and that saves from despair.

I wonder, dear friends, if this is all words to you? What would be your salvation in a time of severe trial, disappointment, discouragement, opposition, perhaps of disillusionment? I suggest to you that it is that the Christ whom you have seen and come to know is bigger than all that. You just cannot give up everything because of the difficulties, for what you have seen of Christ is so real. It is not theory, nor mere teaching. It is not mere verbiage. No, it is your own heavenly vision. You have seen, and what you have seen you just cannot un-see. What has come to you you cannot let go as some mere thing, for it is your life. And when I say 'it', I mean Him. What the land was to Moses Christ was to Paul—very, very real, very wonderful and very great. And that was hope in a day when it might well have been despair and deep depression.

So, what is it? It is the fulness of Christ that has got a grip on the heart, is pulling at the heart strings and drawing on, getting through the transition, and disappointment, of sorrow, of anguish, and of all that into which we have been brought in

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

those training ways of God when it would have been so easy to give it all up—if it were not that we have *seen* the Land; that we have been to Pisgah's mountain, and viewed the Land; that we have had some revelation of Jesus Christ to our hearts that just cannot be given up as something that does not work, and does not matter.

"That I may know *Him!*" says Paul in this chapter. That is not the quest of a beginner, but of a man at the end of a long and full life of learning Christ. Here, at the end, with that so full and rich knowledge of his Lord, gained through all the years of training, he says, in effect: 'My knowledge of the Lord is such that I see far beyond my present attainment and experience. I see that He is far, far greater than anything to which I have yet come.' So it is that he says: "That I may know him!"

There does come a time in the Christian life when the Lord says: 'Now, look here, I have been dealing with you. I have been making you know and understand very much, and now the time has come when all that is going to be put to the test as to its real value. Have you learnt the lessons? What do they amount to now in your being able to take responsibility in spiritual things?' Those crises arise from time to time. They are very real, for a new phase of things is breaking upon the people of God. I do not think I am wrong if I say that the time has begun when the people of God are going to be put to the test as to their inheritance, as to what they have received from the Lord.

Now, let us gather up all the values of our past experience of the Lord and His past dealings with us and bring them to this resolve:

'I press on . . . I press on . . . I press toward the goal of the prize of the on-high calling of God in Christ Jesus.'

I wonder if we can come to that resolve! Individually, you may have been in the fires and have been having a pretty hard and painful time in your spiritual life, but that only means that God has been preparing you for something more. No, God is not a God who believes in bringing everything to an end. He is always after something more. He is made like that, if I can put it so. Something more, and then something more—that is God! And if He has to clear the way for something more by devastating methods, well, that is all right, for it is something more that He is after. There is so much more, far, far transcending all our asking or thinking.

I said that individually you may have been in the fires, but it may also be as a company. The Lord does deep, deep ploughing, but it is always in order to do deep sowing. He wants a harvest, a crop, and his past dealings, though they may seem to have been devastating, are only in the light of that so much more that He would have. But there must be this resolve to go on, and not give up: 'I am going on, by the grace of God. I press toward the goal!'

May that spirit be found in us!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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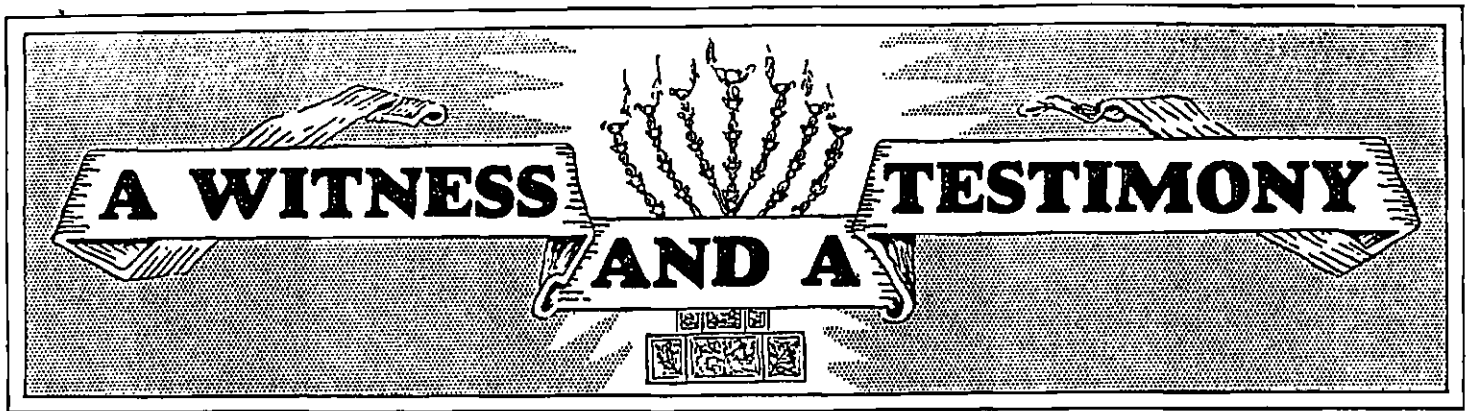
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FROM THE EDITOR

BELOVED FRIENDS,

We asked for much prayer for the conference in Switzerland in September. It is therefore due to you to be told of the Lord's very great faithfulness in answering. Many who have been at these conferences over a number of years said that this was the best ever. As you know, after twelve years at Aeschi, and more years in other places, we had to find a new and larger hotel this year. This was found (through the help of one of our old friends) and everyone said that there could be none better. It made it possible for practically all our guests to be under one roof, in very comfortable provision. There were also daily visitors in addition to the resident conference company. The management and staff were most helpful, and the Lord gave us beautiful weather throughout. We have often remarked that, apart from the ministry, the fellowship at these conferences is a very great blessing, for so many come from lonely places where fellow-

ship with other believers is very limited. Our company was composed of friends from some twelve nations, such as France, Denmark, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, South Africa, India, Australia, Yugoslavia, United States of America, the United Kingdom, and Singapore.

The ministry was fulfilled by Mr. Poul Madsen, Mr. Roger Forster, Mr. W. E. Thompson, and the Editor.

The gathering around the Lord's Table on the closing day of the conference was both precious and wonderful. It was just as though the nations were waiting at the door in order to move in to lay their tributes of praise at the Lord's feet. The opening of that door to worship just found a spontaneous stream of thanksgiving which would have gone on much longer than time permitted. It was a miniature of that vision of saints from all nations worshipping the Lamb to which we are looking forward.

Valuable help in the interpretation was given by

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

our brothers Rohrer, Wolff, and Vaiss. The messages, in whole or part, will appear in the *Witness and Testimony*, and we should very much have liked to have put in this issue a full message from each speaker, but the completion of some series makes it necessary for us to hold these over until later.

We have come from that conference feeling quite truly that it was really of the Lord, and much conflict beforehand was well explained.

So we thank all who prayed with and for us, and we greet all who were with us.

Now, with this issue of the paper we complete another year. It is truly of the Lord's grace that we have done so, for it has been a year of unusual pressure and difficulty. There have been times when we have wondered whether our ministry was not drawing to a close. It has not been easy to reconcile such a contingency with the many—and growing number of those—who express their sense of need for what the Lord gives through this medium. But that event must come at some time, either by our personal homecall, or by His coming. The Lord has given us a motto for 1971 which, while encouraging

and assuring us, seems to point to need in the coming days. It is not easy to believe that things can go on much longer as they are in the world. Much easier is it to believe that His coming is drawing very near. Amongst the various 'signs' in the national, international, political, industrial, phenomenal, etc., the moral degeneration has always been a very clear pointer to an intervention on God's part; what the Bible calls "the cup of iniquity". Surely this cup is fast filling up. In Noah's time it was said that 'every imagination of man's heart was evil'. The Pilgrim Church longs for home. Nature groans within itself. Iniquity cries in the streets. We all say: "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!" But the urge is upon us to take from the Lord's hands all that He is prepared to give us to feed the hungry sheep. Pray that the strength needed may be given, and that we may still "bring forth fruit (even) in old age".

Thank you truly for all the help you have given through this year, and the Lord make *your* cup overflow with His goodness.

Yours in His unfailing grace,

T. AUSTIN-SPARKS

THE MISSION, THE MEANING, AND THE MESSAGE OF JESUS CHRIST (XII)

(Note: In the sequence of this series of messages, the next in order would be the Letter to the Philippians. This has been included in the other series—last month's issue, "The Battle for Life". Hence, we proceed to "Colossians".)

XII. IN THE LETTER TO THE COLOSSIANS

IN 'Philippians' the climax and crown of all is in one clause: "the Name which is above every name" (ii. 9). That is the point at which the Colossian Letter begins. The supremacy of Christ is horizoned in 'Philippians' by two clauses: "Equal with God" (ii. 6) and "the Name above every name" (ii. 9). In 'Colossians' the One who was equal with God is presented as the Creator of all things and the Upholder or integrating centre. But here we are

brought to the farthest range of His victorious work, and the utmost realm of that "Name". We are not going to take time in telling of and explaining the Gnostic error which called forth this Letter from the Apostle. The conclusion which we shall point out will do all that is necessary in that connection.

Having declared that Jesus Christ was the Creator, the Container, the Consistor and the

Upholder of all things, the Apostle makes one flashing and devastating declaration: "He stripped off the principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it [the Cross]" (ii. 15). This is terrific! It links the Cross with that immense revolt against God and His 'appointed heir of all things' which took place in a dateless past, before creation: the occasion of the "casting down" of Satan and the angels which "kept not their first estate" (Jude 6), a rebellion which has built up a vast world kingdom and system which determined to exclude or prevent Christ from His inheritance. The serried ranks of spiritual forces are opposed to God and all His rights. A kosmic conflict for the government of this world and its occupants has been operative through the ages, and for the universe. This conflict from outside made its first *historical* impact upon the first couple, and it *looks* as though that battle went in favour of Satan. From then on an innumerable host of hostile forces were let loose to press home this advantage. The two major spiritual weapons of Satan and his hosts are sin and death. God's counter to these are righteousness and life in similar sequence. Upon these two pairs the whole Bible rests. Thus it is that something more than historical (i.e. earthly) redemption is essential; it had to be kosmic, universal, super-mundane.

'Colossians' is set in that context, and its focus is the supremacy of Christ and the range of His Cross. The Cross there is seen as cleaving a devastating rift between the two kosmic and world rulers, and between the two forces of sin and death, on the one side, and righteousness and life on the other.

But what a different complexion it gives to Christ crucified! The broken, battered, pierced, bleeding, despised and rejected "Man of Calvary" is not just Jesus the Nazarene dying at the hands of evil men; He is fighting out to an eternal issue the battle of the eternities with the kosmic forces of the universe, and settling for ever the question of sin and righteousness; of death and life, and laying down the foundation of human destiny!

There are two ways of seeing that drama of Calvary. One is that of a human tragedy with all its horrors and pathos, giving a place to Satanic triumph and sinful man's evil power. This interpretation would spell the defeat of God, the vanquishing of righteousness, and the victory of death. Such an interpretation would give credit to all the planners and executors of Christ's destruction and make the crucifixion to be a vindication of the Jewish rulers, who were the primary schemers and actors in the work. But there is another and still deeper interpretation and power. The Bible speaks

of a Wisdom, a profound wisdom which is *hid* in God from before times eternal; hid from men, hid from devils, and hid from Satan himself. This means that both men and the evil kosmic forces are in darkness and blindness, and are deceived, so that they really do not know what they are doing in their hatred, malice, and spite. The result is that, all unconsciously and blindly, they are only carrying out what God intended, and fulfilling the very purpose which they intended to destroy. This is exactly what happened at Calvary. A great work of kosmic redemption was accomplished there through the very means being used by Satan with the idea of totally preventing it. So Paul speaks of "Christ *crucified*, the wisdom and power of God" (I Corinthians i. 23, 24).

The Bible views the human race and the world as being in the prison and authority of this great spiritual system headed by Satan. Man is wholly unable to free himself; he has neither the wisdom nor the power to do so. A Man must come to his rescue and, because it is sin and death which are the binding power and basis of the arch-enemy's hold, the Rescuer and Deliverer must draw both the enemies and their power on to Himself (like Samson and the Philistines)—"through death destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Hebrews ii. 14).

This the Final Adam did when He "to the rescue came". The original commission of the Apostle Paul was couched in these words: "I send thee, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God . . ." (Acts xxvi. 17, 18). There you have it. While redemption has many aspects, which are represented by the various words and terms used in the Gospel, that is the outermost and all-inclusive range and realm in this kosmic redemption.

We have, in much fewer words than are really required, ranged the Gospel of our salvation, but surely we have said enough to show how much greater salvation is than is often so cheaply presented in evangelism. One sometimes thinks that Satan must be very pleased with the cheap and easygoing presentation of this that—to him—spells such devastation! We are called to a very great *heavenly* vocation in the ages to come and to "attain" is through the most terrific debacle in the history of this universe. Read again the Letter to the Colossians in this light. It is surely not without significance that—in the *Holy Spirit's ordering*—this Letter is the last doctrinal document from the pen of the Apostle Paul before the Letters on the Lord's coming, the consummation of all things; although the chronological order would be otherwise.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

Switzerland 1970

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S BIOGRAPHY OF CHRIST (I)

1. THE 'PARCHMENT', THE 'PEN', AND THE PURPOSE

"For whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Romans viii. 29).

"He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things" (Ephesians iv. 10).

"My little children, of whom I am again in travail until Christ be fully formed in you" (Galatians iv. 19).

"... to whom God was pleased to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the nations, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians i. 27).

"... being made manifest that ye are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in tables that are hearts of flesh" (II Corinthians iii. 3).

IT is very important for us to recognize just what those last words are saying. What is the meaning of II Corinthians, chapter three and verse three? To begin with, we can break it up into three things.

Firstly, it says that the Holy Spirit is writing a life of Christ. Secondly, this writing of the life of Christ is in the inner experience of believers. Thirdly, this biography of Jesus Christ is for all men to read. Is that perfectly clear? Well, let us break it up again.

THE PARCHMENT

We will begin with the parchment. You know that the New Testament was written originally upon parchment. At one time the Apostle Paul asked someone very particularly to bring his parchments to him, and probably they were his epistles. Now he says that the Holy Spirit is writing a life of Christ on parchment, but this parchment is the inner life of believers. He says: "Not in tables of stone", and although he does not actually say so, he means that it is not on parchment. The writing material of the Holy Spirit is the inner life of believers. The born-again believer has a new inner life upon which the Holy Spirit can write, but the one who is not born

again is not suitable parchment for the Holy Spirit. The Apostle said quite a lot about that in the first letter to the Corinthians. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them". (I Corinthians ii. 14). In other words, the natural man is not suitable writing material for the Holy Spirit, and it is only the spiritual man who is suitable for the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Lord Jesus said this to Nicodemus, who was very familiar with the parchments of the Old Testament. He knew all about those manuscripts, but the Lord Jesus told him that he was not suitable material for the Holy Spirit. He could not receive Him, and therefore he could not understand what He was doing. The Lord Jesus told him: 'You must be born again, for you must be a new man to understand what the Holy Spirit is saying.'

This new man is made alive to the Holy Spirit and is sensitive to Him. We have here a tape recorder, and all that is being said is being received because the tape is sensitive. If anyone coughs in this meeting we shall hear it for months, and perhaps for years to come! So it is with the spirit of the new man in Christ. The Holy Spirit is writing a life of Christ, and I do trust that we are all going to be very sensitive to Him in these days.

THAT WHICH IS BEING WRITTEN

The next thing that we note is that the spiritual experiences of believers are a repetition of the life of Jesus Christ, and it is upon that statement that our morning meetings this week will be founded. It may take you some time to understand it, but I do want you to recognise what this word is saying. The Holy Spirit is writing a biography of Jesus Christ, and it is a spiritual biography, written in the spiritual life and experience of believers. All that which was true of the Lord Jesus, excepting His deity, is going to be written in our spiritual experience. That is a tremendous statement! And it is going to be a tremendous thing to recognise. You have spiritual experiences; things come into your spiritual history; but if you understand what the Holy Spirit is doing, you should realise that He is writing something about the Lord Jesus, and that

something that was true of the Lord Jesus is being reproduced in you.

You will recall the passages which we read: "Foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son . . . Christ fully formed in you . . . that he might fill all things." Our spiritual life belongs to the "all things", and your spirit is one of the "things".

Let me repeat: The Holy Spirit is now writing a biography, the life of Christ, in the spiritual history of the Lord's people.

SONSHIP THE BASIS OF ALL GOD'S WORK

The first great thing about the Lord Jesus was His Sonship, and the Holy Spirit is writing sonship in us. Remember that sonship always relates to God's purpose, for it is the beginning and the end of His purpose, which is in humanity. While Jesus Christ, as Son of God, is God Himself, sonship relates to humanity. It is in the incarnation of the Lord Jesus that His Sonship is manifested. You see, I am leaving deity aside, for the deity of the Lord Jesus is not something that will be reproduced in us, but, leaving His deity aside, the Holy Spirit is writing His sonship in us. The little fragment that we read said: "That he might be the firstborn among many brethren", and by new birth we receive the gift of sonship.

So, sonship is the basis of all God's work. It begins in Jesus Christ, and then it is carried on in the born-again believer.

THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS

We often use the word 'testimony' in relation to the Lord Jesus. The 'testimony of Jesus' is used in various ways, but it is not a system of doctrine. It is the continuation of the life of Jesus. You can have the doctrine of the testimony and not be an example of the life of Jesus. Our basic word says that we, as living epistles, are to be read and known of all men, but *what* are all men to read and know? Is it a system of doctrine? Is it a form of Christianity? It is not one of the many things that are said about it, but just Christ going on living in His people. We sing:

"Thine be the glory, risen, conqu'ring Son!"
and we put everything on that! He is the risen, glorious Son of God, reliving His life, by the Holy Spirit, in us.

Perhaps that is not very encouraging to us, but that is because we are trying to get it all at once. No, this is a whole lifework of the Holy Spirit, and then, after this life, there is that wonderful paren-

thesis, that interval between this life and the next when we shall all be changed. So we are back at the beginning: "Foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son", and we are being "changed into his likeness" (II Corinthians iii. 18). That is going on through this life—or, it ought to be!—and then there comes the interval when we leave this world and we awake in His likeness.

So the testimony of Jesus in this world is not only that Jesus is alive, but He is alive in us.

Now let me repeat: The life of the believer is intended to be the history of Jesus Christ rewritten. "Ye are an epistle"—or a biography.

THE SCHOOL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

That leaves us with two things. It brings us into the school of the Holy Spirit, where we are learning our lessons, but we are not learning them from a book. We are learning them by what the Holy Spirit is doing in us, which means that when we are in His hands everything that comes into our spiritual history has in it a lesson about Jesus Christ.

So the second thing is that we have to look at our experiences and ask: 'What have I to learn about Christ in this? In what way does this experience provide the Holy Spirit with an opportunity of teaching me something about Jesus Christ?' Sometimes we cannot understand what the Lord is doing with us! We cannot see the meaning of an experience, but if we are really in the hands of the Holy Spirit, our experiences are going to lead us on to know the Lord better. Therefore we must not reject our experiences; we must not think of them as unnecessary; we must not rebel against them; we must not think that they have no meaning; but we must take every experience into the presence of the Lord and say: 'Now, Lord, You must teach me what You mean by letting me have this experience.' That is the foundation of this ministry: learning Christ, but not just in our heads. You may have your heads and your notebooks full of information this week, but it has to go down deeper. The New Testament speaks about "the eyes of your heart" (Ephesians i. 18).

So often at the beginning of a conference people come to us with a lot of problems and questions, and they would like to take all our time getting answers to their problems and questions. They are not always very pleased when we say: 'Wait until the end of the conference, and perhaps you will have no more questions to ask!' If the Holy Spirit is with us He is going to enlighten the eyes of our hearts, and we are going to see with our hearts. That is the best way to see, and the only way.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

You know, a mother sees in one way, and a woman who has had no children sees in another. When our eldest daughter was a little baby she was in her pram, crying very loudly, and a lady came along and said: 'What is the matter with her?' She had not got a wedding ring on. My wife said: 'Oh, she is tired', and the good lady said: 'Well, why does she not go to sleep, then?' The mother understands what someone who has not the heart relationship cannot understand.

The best knowledge is heart knowledge. That word: "The eyes of your heart" is sometimes translated: "The eyes of your understanding", and understanding is the best knowledge.

Now have you got this clear at the beginning? You see, during this conference I am going over the life of Christ and will take up a number of His experiences and will try to show you how those experiences are reproduced in believers so that we become the living biography of Jesus Christ, for that is what those words mean.

I would like you to think about this. The four Gospels have a literal biography of Jesus Christ, but they were written *after* the epistles. They tell us of the earthly life of the Lord Jesus, but when you have that you have not got everything. Indeed, you have only a very little. The epistles were written in order to show us that all that which was in the Gospels has to be made real in us. I have always had a question about going to the Holy Land! If you do not agree with me, well, that does not matter! But, you know, I have been to the Holy Land spiritually. I have seen so much of it in my inner life. I do not need to go to Mount Calvary, for I understand much more of Calvary by not having gone there. I need not go up to the high mountain of the Transfiguration, for I have seen that in my heart. All these things that happened to the Lord Jesus only happened in a temporal way, in order to lay the foundation. The Holy Spirit had

not come down then, so in the Gospels He was only writing a historic life of Jesus. He was not writing the inner spiritual experience of that history. That is what He came down to do, and that is very much better than going to Palestine. Well, go to Palestine if you want to, but remember that the Holy Spirit has come to write Palestine in us, and we are going to think about that this week, if the Lord helps us.

Are you clear about what I have tried to say? "Ye are an epistle [or biography] of Christ . . . written not with ink . . . not in tables of stone", and we may add, 'not on sheets of parchment, not by the finger of man, but by the Spirit of God, who is writing upon the tables which are hearts of flesh'. Does that give you a new idea about what is happening? Remember, then, that if you are in the hands of the Holy Spirit, He is trying to write the life of Jesus Christ in you so that all may be able to read.

The Christians in the early days were known by different names. They were known as Christians, and by other names, but one of the names by which they became known everywhere was: 'The people of the way.' I wonder where that name came from, and how people got that idea? Was it the Christians' different way of life? Yes, perhaps so. Was it their teaching and their practice? Yes, perhaps. But was it because Jesus said: "I am the way", and the Christians were going the way of Christ, and people saw that they were going that way? Perhaps that was what it was, and that is what it is meant to be. These people were going the way of Jesus Christ, and not trying to follow His example. That may be important, but they were going that way because the Holy Spirit in them was taking them that way. The Lord Jesus was driven into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit. There is, or should be, in us an inward urge to go in a certain way, and that way is the way of the Lord Jesus—and in that way we learn Christ. We are 'People of the Way'.

(To be continued)

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

LETTER FROM AN UNCLE

DEAR NEPHEW,

So you have passed your Final Examinations with Honours! We are glad, but we are not surprised. When we heard that you were refusing to

do any study on Sundays we realised that this must have been a difficult resolution for you to keep, for as one gets closer to Finals the pressure mounts and every moment is valuable.

I know that your action worried some of your best friends, who quite understandably feared that you might get behind in your preparation and fail your exams. We did not share this fear. In fact, we felt bolder to pray for your success, because we knew of God's promise: "Them that honour me I will honour" (I Samuel 2.30). I am not sure whether you know this verse, but you have certainly proved that it is true. Yes, it is just as true in 1970 as it was when the man of God spoke it to Eli.

All this has brought back to my mind a striking event which took place in the world of sport at the time when I myself was a student. It happened at the 1924 Olympic Games, which were held in Paris. Eric Liddell, who had just graduated at Edinburgh and was planning to go to China as a missionary, was a well-known athlete in those days, and he had hoped to run in the 100-metres race. He was already British champion, and he had high hopes of the world title, but his hopes were dashed to the ground when the organisers announced that the race would be run on a Sunday.

Liddell was a convinced Christian, and he would not race on the Lord's Day. The British athletic authorities first tried to persuade him to stretch a point, and when he refused they then tried to get the day of the race changed. It was all in vain. Liddell would not run on a Sunday. The only alternative which suggested itself was that he should abandon his ambition for the 100 metres and enter for the 400 metres, which was being held on a weekday. As you know, there is a lot of difference in the two races, and Liddell had not trained for this longer distance. He agreed, though, to have a try at the 400 metres, but not without much criticism by those who felt that he was foolish to throw away the chance of a gold medal for himself and honour for his country.

On the morning of the race one of the masseurs with the British team handed Liddell a note as he left his hotel. He put it into his pocket, saying that he would read it when he got to the Colombes Stadium. Nobody seems to know just when he actually did read it.

Came the time for the 400 metres and came the crack of the starter's pistol. They were off! Liddell was in the outside lane, so you can appreciate that he could not see any of the other runners and had to race as though he were all alone. Naturally, he was far from being alone, for in one of the inner lanes was Imbach of Switzerland, who had already set up a world record of 48 seconds. Fitch of Chicago was in another of the lanes, and as in one

of the preliminary heats he had recorded the even faster time of 47.4 seconds, everybody thought that he had it in the bag. As for Liddell, he had not been able to clock even 48 seconds, which is not surprising when we remember that he was really a 100-metres sprinter.

None of the others ever caught up with Eric Liddell. He beat them all. He won the gold medal all right, and, what is more, he set up a record that remained unbeaten for many years. Harold Abrahams, who is still an athletics commentator, was the British captain that year, and when Liddell raced through to win the race in the record time of 46.7 seconds, he described his effort as "inspired". The runner's own explanation of his success was that he ran the first two hundred metres as hard as he could, and then, with God's help, he ran the second two hundred metres even harder. His former critics were now loud in their praises of his achievement in bringing this honour to his country. He had done more than that—he had brought honour to the Word of God and had proved its practical truth.

You remember that slip of paper which he had put in his pocket. He must have read it some time, for when he returned to the dressing-room he found the masseur and thanked him for it. On the paper the man had written: "In the Old Book it says: 'He that honours me I will honour.' Wishing you the best of success always . . ." Those wishes were fulfilled, for after a life of service to God in China, Eric died in an internment camp there and went to receive the "Well done!" from his Lord.

Perhaps the British captain was right when he described Liddell's running as "inspired". It may be that there is a sense in which all our efforts can be called inspired if their motive is to put God first. 1924 is a long time ago, and it is now 1970, but you and I are still here to face the challenges of life. You have started well. Keep it up! Not just reverence for Sunday, for while that is not without importance, it can easily become a matter of mere superstition. It is the principle which matters and which is all-important—the principle of putting God first.

A man may not win every race. He may not pass every examination. But if he seeks truly to honour God in all things he may be certain of Divine blessing and of ultimate vindication. That you may be such a man is the prayerful wish of

Your affectionate

UNCLE

H. F.

Switzerland 1970

THE FACE OF GOD

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis i. 1).

"And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran" (Acts vii. 2).

"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (II Corinthians iv. 6).

GOD has a face. There is a face behind this universe, a Person with ears that hear, with a mouth that speaks His Word, and with a mind that orders things, that guides and leads. Behind this magnificent universe that God has made the most wonderful thing of all is that there is Someone who can be met, Someone with a face we can get to know. The enemy of our souls hates the face of God! God's message and good news to man is that the light of this glorious glory of God is in the face of Jesus Christ. Nothing could contain God's glory like a face. God is a real Person who is seeking all the time to get to know men and women, to make His face known, so that we can know Him face to face.

Now this was known from the very beginning of mankind. The more we study archaeology, the more we trace primitive societies back to their sources, the more we track world religions back to their beginnings, the more we study the early chapters of the Bible, the more we find that behind the knowledge of man was the knowledge of God, the one God, the Creator of heaven and earth, and that men everywhere approached Him by sacrifice. It was not the earliest knowledge of man to believe in many gods, nor was it man's earliest knowledge to believe that God was a sort of something that filled everything else. The history of the human race confirms the Bible story. In the beginning God was known and worshipped as a Person, a Creator, and man could come to him on the costly price of a sacrifice.

But the god of this world wants to blind our eyes so that we might not see that face and might not know God as a Person, so it was not very long in the history of mankind before priestly men hid the truth in myths and stories, and God was locked up in temples. The one God was split into a hundred

gods and in the sight of men God's face was lost. In Babylon, in Egypt, and later in Greece the polytheism of man hid the face of God.

Then came another movement. Satan was not satisfied with splitting God's face into a hundred faces. There came the reaction of Buddhism, certain forms of Confucianism, and Hinduism, and religion became god in everything as a sort of gas, a sort of misty something that was in everything. God had lost His face and people did not know where to find it. The more people looked into these things, trying to discover the face of God, the more they came to the conclusion that it did not exist, and the devil's attack moved into another stage, the stage of atheism.

What is God doing about all this? Right in the very beginnings of mankind, before pagan religion was in full control, the God of glory appeared and revealed Himself to Abraham, and Abraham discovered that God has a face, an ear, a mouth and a mind. And as Abraham listened to what God had to say, he found out God's plan. God was beginning His counter-attack which goes through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob into the history of Israel, and right on into the days of our Lord Jesus, when God appeared in the face of Jesus Christ. "If any man has seen me," says the Lord Jesus, "he has seen my Father." God was discoverable in His Personhood as man made encounter with our Lord Jesus Christ, and since that day that same God is seeking to appear to men and women, to reveal Himself to us as a Person, so that we can speak to Him face to face.

God cannot be shut up in a little box in the universe, like one of the Babylonian gods of the past, nor is He to be found up in space, as though one day we will open a door and say: 'Oh, there is God, running the controls!' Neither is God to be found by searching around for the soul of our universe, because we do not find anything there. We do not even find a misty gas that we can call God, because our God is the Creator of heaven and earth and He stands in relationship to this earth as an author does to his book. Some people look through the book and say that they cannot find the author in the story, and so they do not believe there is a God. Other people read the book and find the author's fingers on every word; they find Him terribly close, not only in the beautiful things, but also in the bad parts of the story. His fingers are

still there. Many men have listened to the stories, they have heard that God is a misty something and is not a Person, and it may be that they have even become atheists, yet suddenly there is a moment when they cannot avoid the Author any more. God is there and they come to see Him, so they try to hide from Him, but God is difficult to avoid. The Author is on every page, in every experience, but we build up techniques to avoid Him. It was a little more difficult in the past, but it is so easy in the twentieth century, even for Christians, so that they do not know what God is saying, or what He wants in their lives.

There came a moment in Abraham's experience when he could not avoid God any more, and he saw Him. The God of glory appeared to him and began to draw him across the desert to the land of Canaan. When he arrived in the promised land, we read that once again the Lord appeared unto him. He knew that God was a Person, and that he had a face. Two thousand years before our Lord Jesus Christ came, Abraham was getting the good news in the face of Jesus Christ. It is good news to see God, or, rather, it should be, for one day we are all going to have to see Him. It will be a beautiful vision when our hearts will go out in worship and adoration, or else we will cover our eyes and run from the face of Him that sits on the Throne. It is the same face and the same God, but, when heaven and earth pass away and there is nothing left but the unveiled face of God which lies behind the universe, for some men it will mean heaven and for some men it will mean hell. How important it is that we see our God, that we get to know His face, in anticipation of that moment when there will be nothing to behold but the face of the Almighty.

Did I say that for some it will be glory, wonder and worship, while for some it will be destruction? That gives us a clue. Seeing God face to face always means some sort of destruction. That is why we read in verse 7 of Genesis xii. that Abraham built an altar unto the Lord who appeared unto him. That is the reaction of a man who has seen God and wants to go on seeing Him. In the next verse we read that he built another altar and called on the Name of the Lord. In verse 18 of chapter xiii. we read for the third time that he built an altar unto the Lord, and in chapter xxii., verse 9, we once again find Abraham building an altar. It all began with seeing the Lord, and then there was a pathway through the land of promise which was marked by altars. This is the way of the Cross, the pathway of a man who has seen his God. Abraham built four altars, and we will also find in these beginning chapters of the Bible that Isaac dug four wells, that

Jacob set up four pillars, and that Joseph was involved with four sets of dreams. At this crucial point in human history God is reasserting His Personhood, revealing Himself to Abraham by the way of the Cross, to Isaac by the way of the well, to Jacob by the way of the pillars of stone, and to Joseph in a fourfold revelation. Right at the beginning of Israel's history Abraham saw the Cross, Isaac saw the gift of the Spirit (Pentecost), Jacob set up the pillar representing the ground of truth which is the Church of the living God, while Joseph revealed the Lord through his visions. This is always God's pattern of working, from Calvary to Pentecost, to the birth of the Church, to the revelation of Christ in the midst, that we might unveil His face, that we might know our God. It begins in the way of the Cross.

THE CROSS AND THE REVELATION OF LOVE

Now, what does Abraham's action in building an altar when He saw the Lord mean? Well, anything that we see of the Lord is only secured by an altar, for it is only properly experienced in the Cross. Otherwise we lose it, or it destroys us. That is why in the last day some will be destroyed by the vision while others delight in it. The vision of God is the vision of love, and when love reveals itself it is not so that the other person might abuse it or make use of it, but for giving love back to the Revealer, and as we do that we must lose ourselves.

There was a moment in Peter's life when he suddenly saw the Lord. 'You are not Elijah or one of the prophets. You are Christ, Son of the living God!' The Lord Jesus replied: 'That is right, Peter. Flesh and blood did not reveal that to you, but your heavenly Father showed it to you. Now I am going to have to die. I am going to Jerusalem, where I shall be crucified.' Immediately Peter says: 'No! Be it far from You!' Do you remember the Lord's reply? 'Get behind Me, adversary! You savour of the things of man. . . . If any man will come after Me, let him take up his cross, deny himself, and follow Me.' If God has revealed anything to us, it is for the purpose of building an altar, of finding in our hearts that decision to lay hold of the Cross and follow the One who has revealed Himself to us. The other is just self-concern. Peter thought he loved the Lord, in fact, he was sure he did and protested it at the Last Supper, but you remember his failure to follow the Lord. Then there came that moment on the resurrection morning, and once again he had seen the Lord, but this time he did not say anything to anyone.

It is in that moment of revelation, when God

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

shows us something in Jesus Christ, that we have to decide what we are going to do with it. Do we give it back to Him? That hurts! But if we decide that it is all for Him, being what we owe Him in love, we have something which we can never lose, because it has been given back to Him.

Judas was sitting there at that Last Supper, and there was another unveiling of our Lord Jesus. He offered His person to Judas in the sop, revealing Himself in utter, Divine friendship, which goes on loving in the face of hatred. In that moment Judas saw the Lord, but he did not want to build an altar. He did not want the pain of giving himself back, of losing himself, of having to say: 'I am wrong. I am sorry!' He did not want the pain of making a confession of sin and self, so he put up a barrier, and went out into the night. That meant a self-crucifixion, for he had to hang himself. The face of God drives a man to the one thing or to the other. That is why some Christians are not moving on with God, but find destruction in their lives. They are trying to grasp the revelation of the Lord Jesus and make something of themselves from it, when it was a revelation of love, given that they might learn to love Him.

That is the whole paradox of Calvary. Some of us stand there and look at Jesus dying, and we say: 'Goodness always finishes up in a cross. There is the judgment of goodness in God!' But God says: 'That is the judgment of the world.' Some of us stand at Calvary and see that moment of Christ mangled and crucified, and we say: 'Everything good has gone!' but God points at the Cross and says: 'There Christ is condemning sin in the flesh.' We think it is the end, but God says it is the beginning. There are two sides of Calvary—our assessment and God's view. It is the same God, the same Cross and the same revelation of the Lord Jesus, but one will be our destruction, while the other will be our salvation.

Do we want to see the Lord? Then that love which has been revealed to us has to be responded to in the hurt and pain of real life, which loses itself and gives itself back to its Maker.

THE CROSS AND PRAYER

Abraham was beginning the pathway to Calvary. If you look at Genesis xii. 8 you will see that not only did Abraham know that God had a face, because God appeared to him, but he believed that He had an ear, because he built an altar and called on the Name of the Lord. Yes, God has an ear, but Abraham got the ear of God through an altar. What does that mean? If we start talking to God

and calling on His Name, we are saying that we need God, that in ourselves we are not sufficient. In effect, we are saying: 'You are the Author. I am only one of the characters of the Book and I depend upon You'—and that is another meaning of Calvary. Without God we are like a man who is twisted and mangled on a cross, and God is saying: 'Look, that is man without Me. Finished, meaningless, hopeless, puny and weak.' That is one side of the Cross; but when we have built an altar and have seen ourselves like that, then we have to call on the Name of the Lord. The most stupid thing that man can do is not to call on the Name of the Lord, not to apply to God, but to act as though he were independent and did not need Him.

If we are Christians we will remember how we first began in the Christian life. We needed Christ for everything, and were calling on the Name of the Lord. We knew how much we needed Him, and if we began to preach, we knew how much more we needed Him! But time has gone on. We get on quite well now in witnessing to others, for we know the answers, and as for the problems that come into our lives, well, we can handle most of them. When it comes to preaching even, we do not need Him as much as we used to. But we are not building the altar! If we are building the altar of the Cross, we must cry to Him. We need Him in everything, in every experience, and even when we pray. Therefore we should pray, even if sometimes the answer turns out to be 'No'. So often when that happens we give up praying. We still go to church and will still talk about Christian things, but God said 'No!' so what is the point of praying? Or our prayer was not answered in the way that we thought it should be, and so we say: 'It does not matter if I call on the Name of the Lord!'

There was a moment in the life of Moses when he was on the mountainside praying for the people of Israel, and God said to him: 'Moses, those people of yours that you brought out of Egypt are hopeless! I am going to finish them all off and am going to start a new denomination through you.' I wonder what you would say if God spoke like that to you! Probably: 'Well, Lord, I am very humble about this, but You know Your own business better than I do. So if You really want it, Lord, I will be the president of the new denomination.' But Moses did not say that. He replied to God: 'Lord, they are *Your* people. *You* brought them out of Egypt!' God did not want them, nor did Moses. No one wanted them, but Moses went on praying for them. He was up the mountain again another day and said: 'God, don't slaughter any more of the people of Israel. Blot *me* out of Your

book, and save them.' God said: 'You leave the blotting out of the book for Me to do. It is My book and I am concerned with righteousness. I will blot out those whom I will blot out.' Moses had it wrong again, so the next time he was up he said to God: 'God, please go on with us. Don't send an angel in front. Please come down into our midst.' And God replied: 'I will show you My glory.' Moses replied: 'Lord, show *us* Your glory!' God said: 'Stand back and I will show *you* My glory.' Moses had it wrong again, but it did not matter. When we have built an altar and have called on the Name of the Lord, we know that our misunderstandings do not matter. And when Moses went down the mountainside the people did see God's glory, in the face of Moses. God did come down into their midst again, in the middle of Moses, and God did go on with them, even though they had to die in the wilderness. Moses' misunderstanding of God's ways did not matter. He was crucified, and did not stop praying because God did not answer his prayer in his way. So we need a Cross in our prayer-life.

Abraham prayed: 'Lord, can You not save this city? If there are fifty righteous people there . . . forty-five . . . and right the way down to ten, will You not save it?' He dared not go down any lower than ten, but God said: 'I will save the city if there are ten.' He knew there were not ten righteous people there, but He saved three and a half, for Lot's wife did not quite make it. God was using that prayer of Abraham, although he did not know how to pray as he ought. 'We know not how to pray as we ought,' says Paul, 'but the Spirit makes intercession for us in a man who is just dependent upon God.' 'Lord, I don't know everything, nor do I understand everything. I can do nothing—but You can do everything. Lord, I need You.' How the Lord Jesus needed His Father! 'That which I say is what My Father is saying. What I am doing is what My Father is doing.' There was an altar, a cross, in the heart of the Lord Jesus, so that when the time of the Last Supper came and He stood up to pray, He prayed: 'Father, glorify thy Son *that the Son may glorify thee.*' That is prayer! And the Lord Jesus always prayed that sort of prayer. Baptism is a picture of it: 'I cannot!' as we go under the water, and then: 'He can!' as we come up the other side. There must be a Cross as the basis of our prayer-life, where we have seen ourselves as ruined and finished.

THE CROSS AND EXPERIENCE

Now, thirdly, Genesis xiii. 14 says: "Lift up now thine eyes, and look . . . northward and southward

and eastward and westward; for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it." As Abraham looked at that land he knew that God had a mouth. He already knew that God had a face and appeared, and that He had an ear and listened. Now he knew that God had a mouth and He spoke: 'All this land is for you.' It was a broad land, with so much to see, but what was Abraham's reaction? He went down to a place called Hebron and there he built an altar unto the Lord. He did not walk over the vast geography of Palestine, but went to one spot, narrowed that down to an altar, and there he sacrificed to the Lord.

You see, God deals with us in particulars, not generalities. We can carry general truths in our minds, but God makes them particular in given events. The whole land of Canaan says: 'God is free and full of love!' but the place of Hebron where Abraham builds the altar is an event in the home, an experience at work, a challenge in prayer, a requirement of God concerning our lives, and it is there that the whole test of the truth comes into experience. We want to keep God's truth in generalities, but God is all the time trying to get it down to particulars, to details, because that is where the Cross is, and as we go through the Cross we will discover the broadness of God's revelation to us.

You remember that this morning our brother was reminding us that the Spirit of God is writing upon our lives the story of the Lord Jesus. It is being written word by word. Abraham might have said: 'Oh, but I know the whole story of the Lord Jesus. I have lifted up my eyes to the north and there is Galilee, with Christ coming out of Nazareth.' The Lord is even in the despised places! Then Abraham looks south. There is Bethlehem, and he sees the humility of our God in the Babe of Bethlehem. Then he looks to the northwest, and there is the mountain where Christ was transfigured, and there he sees the glory of the Lord. Then, maybe, he looks at Olivet and sees the Lord going up. 'All the land I have given you; all the history of the Lord Jesus I have given you; all the geography of Christ is yours.' That is what Canaan is—the geography of the Incarnation, the platform upon which Jesus lived and walked. But we have to go down to Hebron, and what is general starts to be made specific in an event on Calvary, where we say: 'Lord, not my will, but Yours be done.' In that moment the Spirit of God is writing on the parchment of our lives. You cannot write on parchment without scratching it. The tear is the way the ink gets into the fabric, and Calvary is the way the Spirit of God gets the life of Jesus into our inner man, in those

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desperate moments when we are fighting with God over some issue and the Christian life seems to be so narrow. It seems like a strait gate and we feel we are being pressurised to get through. We are going to lose everything. We thought it was the liberty of the Spirit and that we could run up and down the land of Canaan and it would all be ours. But the Lord keeps pressing, and at last we get through. 'Not my will, but Your will be done!'—and to our surprise the strait gate leads to eternal life, the narrow way brings us into the broad places, and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty, but it came through the Cross. When we go through the Cross of our own death and stand, naked spirits, before our God, all that is being written on our spirits of the life of the Lord Jesus has come because there have been moments when we have said: 'Not my will, but Thine be done.' The real, deep decisions of the spirit, which have been the Cross through which the Spirit can write the life of Jesus, are going to last for eternity. Those nice things about you, and those bad things about me which you cannot stand will be in the grave. They were a part of our bodies, but the inner man has come from those decisions before God, with the pen of the Cross, written in the ink of the Spirit, writing the history of the Lord Jesus in our lives.

This was the third cross, and I am sure that most of us will have had such experiences before our God. Perhaps some of us are having them now. We are hesitating about building the altar: 'Thy will be done!' You know where that led Jesus! Well, we go that way, too, but it leads to the whole land of Canaan.

THE CROSS AND THE SACRIFICE OF OBEDIENCE

You know the story of the fourth altar. As Abraham went up the mountainside with his son he was leaving behind everything that he really had. God's blessings must go on the altar and be broken up to dust. God's gifts, the gift of his son, God's joys—for Isaac means 'laughter' and it meant that to Abraham—the relationship that God had established—all that went to the altar. Everything that Abraham had lived for was going on to that altar. The purpose of his existence and his spiritual history were to be burnt up on that altar as Isaac died, and, perhaps above everything else, all that he really thought he knew about God was going on that altar, for that is what Isaac represented. Years of waiting, years of praying, all the promises of God to him to help him to understand this child, and now it was all on the altar and there was a knife in

his hand. He had mentioned to the men below that both of them would be coming back after the sacrifice, but here came the moment when he must obey his God. Can you do it, Abraham? Can you bring that knife down into that child, knowing all that he stood for? I do not think that Abraham could! I think he would have to say: 'I cannot, but *He* can!' As he stood on the top of the mountain he was no fanatic with a deluded mind, stirred up in the emotions of the moment, who would bring the knife down and regret the act. He had gone as far as a man could, and was crying in his heart: 'Lord, if it is going to come down, You must bring it. I cannot, but You can. I have built the altar. The sacrifice is there. The knife is in my hand.' As he looks through the blade, glinting in the sun, and the breast of his son rising in its last beats, suddenly he hears the voice of the Lord: 'Lay not your hand on the child, for now I know.'

Abraham had met the mind behind the face, the intelligence behind the universe, and with his eyes fixed between the blade of the knife and his son's breast he saw the Lord. Jesus said: 'Abraham saw My day and rejoiced.' Abraham was looking forward two thousand years to where, on the very same spot—for Mount Calvary stands on Mount Moriah—the Lord Jesus was going through that picture and there was going to be bared the heart of God's Calvary love on the Cross. The heart and mind of God revealed at Calvary were pre-acted two thousand years before through Abraham and his son, and that is the Cross. The Cross is the place where God's great love is revealed, and He seeks to reproduce that sort of love in us, for we are being "conformed to the image of his Son", and the revelation that the world looks for, and the expression which God's heart yearns for, is that that Calvary love might be reproduced in His people, that what we saw in Jesus Christ of God's all-mighty love might be reproduced in us and poured out to the world.

But it needs the Cross. There is another altar to be built. It is the altar which will be built when, like Abraham, we are prepared to go on, and on, and on with God, because that is the way of going on—the way of the Cross, when we come to the place where we say: 'Lord, I do not know what you want of me next. I do not know what you want to do with me next. I do not understand what the next phase of Your programme is, but You are the heart and the mind that is behind the face, and I give myself to it, even if it means that I seem to be sacrificing my blessings, my calling, my gifts, my past knowledge of Yourself. It all goes to the altar so that all that, and a lot more, can come out again

in a new way, in the resurrection way of Isaac as he laughs his way down the hill.'

Have we come to this conference wanting to go on with God? God has something new for us, something new for Europe, something new for this

world, for this generation, but we are not going to move on with God unless it is by the way of the Cross. Here we are on Mount Moriah, saying: 'Let us see Your day, Lord Jesus. Help us to rejoice in it as we go on with You.'

R. T. F.

THE BATTLE FOR LIFE (V)

CHAPTER V

THE CONTINUATION OF THE CONFLICT IN RELATION TO THE INDIVIDUAL BELIEVER

WE are seeking to take a further step in the apprehension of what is related to this great and pressing matter, and are going to deal with the continuation of the conflict, with reference to its nature and its sphere.

THE NATURE OF THE CONFLICT

The work of the Lord Jesus in His Cross has now been set forth in two respects. On the one hand, we have noted there was that which was actually complete and final in His work; the fact that the Lord did destroy him that had the power of death, and also death itself. *With regard to Himself, that is a finished work.* His presence at the right hand of God declares that death, the grave, and Satan, have been brought to naught, and no longer have any power over Him. On the other hand, there is what we have called the potential work of His Cross; that is, that Christ did something which in Himself is full and final, but which has yet to become full and final in the saints; something which was *for* the saints, but which has still to become complete *in* their experience. It is potential, so far as the Church is concerned, although in Him, its Head, they have it in finality. As the result of the work of His Cross, and as the grand issue of His resurrection, eternal life is received already by those who believe. But while that life is itself victorious, incorruptible, indestructible, the believer has to come by faith to prove it, to live by it, to learn its laws, to be conformed to it. There is a deposit in the believer which in itself needs no addition, so far as its quality is concerned. So far as its victory, its power, its glory,

its potentialities are concerned, nothing can be added to it. But the course of spiritual experience, of spiritual life, is to discover, to appropriate, and to live by all that the life represents and means. That is to say, the course of spiritual life and experience is the course of discovering and living by the values of that life which is within, and which is succoured from above.

It is important to recognise that as a discriminating word. We are very often inclined to think that the life of the Lord in us needs in some way to be improved, to be added to, when really what is required is that we should discover what we have, and, discovering it by experience, live according to it. This life is not something apart from the Lord Jesus, and we can never think of His standing in need of some improvement, nor of the possibility of something being added to Him to make Him complete, or more complete. We would never think like that. And this life is one with Himself. As the Apostle says, it is Christ who is our life, and our need is to discover what Christ is in us, and to live accordingly. So in a very real sense it is a matter of the life getting more of us, rather than of our getting more of the life. That, at any rate, is the way of its working.

This, in the ordering of God, has to be done in a world where death still rules and works; for in this world the destruction of death has not yet been made manifest. Death, like the devil, goes on, although Calvary still remains full victory. We are left in this world, and it is in this world where death reigns and works as a great energy that we, by this sovereign ordering of God, have to come to prove the values of the life which has been deposited in us, and to discover its potentialities. This is an experi-

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mental discovery. It therefore resolves itself into battle between that which is in this world and the life which is in the believer. It is the battle for life; not as to the forfeiture of that life—not as to whether death can take eternal life away from us, for that is not the question at issue—but as to the triumphant expression and the full manifestation of the power of that life. That is the issue. We may have eternal life, and yet that life may be pressed away in our very being without expression, without manifestation, without any triumphant issue. It may be there, but cramped and smothered.

That which is true in the case of the individual believer can be equally true in the case of the Church, the collective company; it may have life, eternal life, and yet there may be no expressed testimony of its presence, or but a very limited manifestation. With this expression, this manifestation—not only with the possession of life but with the testimony to that possession—there are bound up no lesser issues than the resurrection and lordship of Jesus Christ. The testimony to the fact that Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead and is at the right hand of the Majesty on High in absolute lordship is bound up with an expression here—let us repeat—of that life which is His risen life. That is no small matter. The last Adam was made a “life-giving spirit”—life-giving, that is, life manifesting itself, life being transmitted, life expressed—and if that is not exemplified in and through the believer, and through the Church as a whole, there is something taken away from the testimony of the Lord Jesus. How is there to be the proof, the demonstration, the evidence, the final establishment of the fact that Jesus is alive from the dead, and is Lord? It is by the triumphant expression of His life in His own. It is not by a doctrinal statement. Christ is never proved to be alive from the dead, nor to be Lord, by doctrinal statements. Your statement of faith may include the fact that you believe Jesus died and rose again, ascended to heaven, and is at the right hand of the Majesty on High, but how are you going to prove your statement? What has God given as the evidence of that? You may believe it; you may be willing to lay down your life for that faith; you may state it with tremendous emphasis, and yet you are not thereby proving it. You will never prove anything by saying: ‘I believe with all my might that this is the case!’ You will never prove a thing by standing up and declaring it as something which you believe. You will never prove a thing by saying: ‘I believe in all the fundamentals of the Christian faith!’ and calling yourself by some name which indicates that you believe in the inspiration of the Bible. Nothing is

ever proved in that way. Reducing the whole matter to these two points—that Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead, and is Lord of all—you have still to prove your statement after you have made it. If you have appealed to the fact that the Word of God says so, even then you have proved nothing. Your proof can never be by argument, because what argument can build up argument can pull down, and what logic can construct logic can destroy.

How, then, are you going to prove that this is so? By the expression and manifestation of His risen life, that is all—but it is a mighty ‘all’! That signifies that you are the embodiment of the thing which you declare—that besides the doctrinal statement there is the living expression. Thus the resurrection and the lordship of Jesus are bound up with this expression which is called the ‘testimony’. The testimony is not a system of truth. It is that extra factor to the statement and presentation of truth which is the power of a life which conquers death. How, then, will you prove that Jesus has conquered death? The proof of it will be a death-conquering life that expresses itself in you.

This being the case, it means that the whole issue is one of a life-power by which Christ is attested. We do not put the life in the place of Christ, but we say that the attestation of Christ is by the life. We do not mean the manner of life, but the life-power, the impact of a spiritual force which emanates from Him as in the throne, the registration upon a spiritual realm of a greater spiritual power. That is the attestation of the Lord Jesus. Therefore the major weapon of the enemy will be death. Death is also a spiritual power. Thus it becomes a battle between two spiritual powers, the power of life and the power of death. The battle goes on, and will go on, until the Church becomes so vitalised by this Divine power that, in a moment, those who went into the grave, and those who are alive and remain, are united in a mighty resurrection-ascension to the Lord in glory. The battle between these two great spiritual powers will go on till then.

That is the battle in which we find ourselves. It is an intensifying battle, and we had better recognise it once for all. It is difficult to accept that sometimes, even though we assent to it mentally. When things become difficult we are surprised and wonder, perhaps thinking it strange that it should be so. But it must be recognised and accepted that this spiritual warfare between life and death will intensify toward the end, and it will reach its highest point of tension right at the point where the Church is about to be translated. That is undoubtedly made clear by the Word of the Lord.

THE SPHERE OF THE CONFLICT

We speak in the first place about the individual believer. We must remember that this life of the risen Lord, as linked with the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of life, resides in the very deepest part of our being, in our spirit, or in what the New Testament calls "the inner man". Therefore the most spiritual people will find that the conflict of life rages around and upon their spirit. There is a direct assault upon their spirit in order to get their spirit weakened, shut in and pressed down, so that somewhere in the depths of their being they feel that they are unable to breathe, so to speak. They cannot actually locate it, but they are conscious that right within there is a locking up, a pressing, a hemming in, a suffocating of spirit. One of two things will result. Either their spirit will be pressed out under this weight of spiritual death, and they will go under; or else they will have to call earnestly upon the Lord that they may be strengthened with might by His Spirit into the inward man, and then exercise faith on the ground of their prayer and seek to assert their spirit against this thing.

The trouble with a great many of the Lord's people is that they do not rise up in spirit and, in the name of the Lord, meet and resist that thing which is threatening to crush the very life out of their spirit. There is an accepting of things; there is a consenting; there is a passive attitude; or else there is a getting into an awful swirl of questionings, doubtings, arguments and discussions with the devil, going round in an eternal circle of introspection and self-analysis, when really in such circumstances believers ought in their spirits to rise up in faith in the name of the Lord to resist this thing and refuse to have it, calling, in His name, upon the energies of the Holy Ghost. We shall never get through until we learn how to do that. If the enemy finds that he can hold the situation by keeping us in that circle, that awful going round of debate, argument, discussion, of analysing, of questioning, of doubting, he will keep us going round; he will whip us up like a circus horse to keep us running round all the time, while we never get beyond the point where we started. If you keep going back there all the time, not making one fragment or fraction of real spiritual progress toward victory, you can go on so indefinitely.

Another favourite method of the enemy is to try to get us to explain this thing along lines which are less than the real explanation, to draw in other things which he would like us to believe may account for it. The things may be numerous and various. If we settle down to accept such an

explanation, it will prove our undoing. While there may be much that he can use and play upon in natural conditions, and while it may be true that he is making the most of all that is available of our own human weakness, and perhaps our physical condition, and our constitution, our make-up, and our surroundings, nevertheless ultimately it may not be a question of anything in nature at all, but a matter of being strong in spirit. You may take it as one of the settled things that there is no hope for anybody in the direction of those natural conditions. If you start working from the circumference to the centre, you are working the wrong way, and you will not get through; you will be held on the circumference until you are dead. The enemy will not let you reach the centre from the circumference. You must start at the centre and work outward. The key to victory is our spirit-union with our risen and reigning Lord.

There are other realms, of course, in which this death battle goes on, and where this assault of death is made upon the believer. Sometimes it is upon the mind. There is a darkening, a numbing, or something like a paralysing of the mind when you turn to consider the things of the Lord. At other times you may be quite clear and free, and your mind have little trouble in working in ordinary things, but immediately you come to spiritual things, to the things of the Lord, you discover that your mind is becoming overclouded, and is not functioning. It is being paralysed; there is a darkness and a death creeping over it. The enemy does make assaults upon our minds; there is no doubt about that. He attacks our soul: not only the intellectual side, but every side. The enemy makes an assault upon the emotional side, to dry up and freeze our feelings, so that we are totally incapable of giving any response or of exercising any kind of heart function in relation to the Lord. The same is true in the realm of the will. There are times when it seems we cannot make a decision, and *cannot* will in the way of the Lord. The will comes under assault like that.

Death breaks upon us in each of these spheres, and the experience is more or less common to us all. It is a battle. As is the case with the spirit directly, and also with the soul, so it is with the body. There is no doubt at all that the enemy makes assaults upon the bodies of the Lord's people. I do not say that every malady, every sickness, every physical weakness, every bit of natural tiredness is the direct work of the devil. Of course, historically it is the outcome of his work, but immediately it need not be the direct work of the devil, and we are not saying that it is. We should find ourselves in great difficulties were we to teach that. But there are direct

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attacks of the enemy in the spirit of death upon the bodies of the Lord's people. Where there is a weakness he may fasten upon it, add to it, and seek to cripple us altogether through our weakness when, although that basic weakness might remain, we need not be crippled by it. That has been the history of the Lord's people. It becomes a question as to whether the enemy is going to use that thing to undo us altogether, or whether, in spite of it, we are to be found proving the power of a life which triumphs over it, and carries us on.

PAUL'S THORN IN THE FLESH

The Apostle Paul always comes to our help in these matters. Paul has placed it on record that, because of the greatness of the revelation which came to him, lest he should become exalted above measure there was given unto him a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him, to smite him in the face. For this thing he besought the Lord thrice, but the Lord said: "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (II Corinthians xii. 9). We have good reason to believe that the weakness was physical weakness. I find it difficult not to believe that it was malaria. There is every reason, I think, to believe that to have been the malady. Paul's journeys were oftentimes in places which were infested with the malarial elements, while he was without any of the modern helps to overcome them. And when you remember that the complaint affected his eyes—anybody who knows anything about malaria knows of those sharp pangs through the eyes which in the long run do interfere with the organs of sight—it all points strongly to malaria. We are not arguing that it was so, but we find difficulty in believing that such was not the case. But, whatever it was, here is something which from time to time laid hold of Paul, and it seemed that he never knew when this thing was going to overtake him. His "thorn" was undoubtedly physical weakness, and it is called "a messenger of Satan". The whole direction of it, from the enemy's side, was a working of death. In relation to that, Paul speaks of death working in this mortal flesh. It was all in the direction of death, death, death; he was facing and fighting death all the time. But the point is, that while the devil most clearly had to do with this physical state, as the statement shows, and the Lord Himself permitted it, it did not work out in death. On the contrary, the course of that man's life is the course of a continual triumph over that death and Satan. That the power of death does assail, and that the Lord does not all the time prevent the devil from attacking these

bodies, is manifest. But that does not mean that the Lord intends us to die! You might think the logic to be that if the Lord allows a messenger of Satan, whose effect is death, surely the Lord means us to die. There is no justification for such an argument. Quite the opposite is the case. The Lord had a very salutary purpose for everything in the case of the Apostle, and this working of death was expressly used to keep the man spiritually alive; for had he not had the thorn, his spiritual life would have been smitten with a blight. Hear his own words: "Lest I should be exalted above measure..." Find the man exalted above measure, and you find the man of poor spiritual life, for his spiritual life has been blighted. Find the man who is kept humble in this way, and yet triumphant in a way which is not explained on a natural ground, and you will find the man who is a giant in spirit.

Yes, the enemy does attack the body. He impinges upon what is already there and seeks to intensify it. He seeks to cripple the saints. But the whole of this word, especially in relation to the life of the Apostle Paul, is one great declaration that even in the presence of a natural handicap, a natural weakness, or something with which the devil himself has come in at a given point in the permission of God, there is a life which can carry us on to the fulfilment of a great Divine purpose which need not be curtailed because of natural conditions. Get hold of that! Do not sink under your condition and say: "Because such and such is the case with me, then the Divine purpose in its greater dimensions is impossible!" That is despair, not faith. The Apostle's declaration was this: "... that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me" (Galatians ii. 20). It was life by faith in the Son of God. And what a living it was! What a life it was! Indeed, in his case it was a life triumphant over ever-present death. You must remember that the ministry of Paul to these Galatians was occasioned by "an infirmity in the flesh", i.e. a physical sickness, affecting his eyes (iv. 13, 14).

It was a battle. Read the second letter to the Corinthians, and you will see the traces of the battle. Paul had just emerged from that desperate situation where he despaired of life. He had been laid so low with this thing, whatever it was, that he never expected to recover. But he came out. He bore the marks of the battle with death (Galatians vi. 17), but he continued on his course long after he wrote the second letter to the Corinthians. Some of the most glorious things found expression after that. Let us believe in the possibilities of the Lord's life within us, and disclaim all the arguments in our

own state, or which the enemy would impose upon us by reason of how we feel and how things appear. We must all take this to heart.

LIFE IS DEEPER THAN OUR CONSCIOUSNESS

We close by referring to this one point. We must seek always to believe in the fact that this Divine life, with all its tremendous potencies, is far deeper down than surrounding conditions and circumstances, than our own physical life, and than our own soul-life. Unless we grasp that, hold that firmly, we have not the ground of victory. When we feel that death is working with such tremendous force in the realm of our bodies or our souls, and everything in this sentient life of ours speaks of death, we are too often in danger of surrendering the whole position. I believe that this thing which is of God is deeper than our mortal being. I believe that it is possible even for children of God, being truly born again and possessing eternal life, to lose their reason and go into an asylum, and yet to have no change made in the deepest fact and reality of the being in relation to the Lord. We touch that point to indicate what we mean—that if our rational life is the sum total of our life, then it is a poor look-out for us. If our sanity, our natural mental balance, is the ground of our being children of God, then some from time to time would have real reason to doubt whether they were born again. And if that is true in the mental, it is true in the physical. This life of the Lord is far deeper than this mortal life of ours.

I am going to say something which may, to some, sound very terrible. It may perplex some, but it may help others. It is this: it is possible for a true child or servant of God, living in true fellowship with Him and walking in the light as far as they have it, to pass through a time of deep and terrible darkness. At such a time it may *seem* as though the Lord has left them and that Satan has taken His place of government. Prayer seems impossible or useless, and the Bible closed. Evil seems triumphant. The promises of God never to leave nor in anywise to forsake seem to have failed. Things may seem to be even worse than that, and one's salvation may be brought into question. Such has been the experience of some of the most saintly, devoted, and God-used servants of the Lord. Abraham had it (Genesis xv. 12). Jeremiah knew it (Jeremiah xx. 7). David knew it (Psalm 22). Job knew it. Our Lord Jesus knew it (Matthew xxvii. 46). Dr. A. B. Simpson had this experience near the end of his wonderful life for God. And so it has been with others.

What is the explanation? With all my heart I do

not believe that this seeming forsakenness is true, however real it may seem. In many cases it is because those concerned have done so much damage to the kingdom of Satan that he has rallied all his forces to quench their life and testimony. Or it may be that the enemy has discerned the potential value of a life which will be a menace to his interests. But, whether either of these explanations be true or not so, the fact remains that, where the Lord Jesus truly is, the battle for life often assumes most serious forms. Sometimes it is a devastating and desolating experience.

We need to remember that these are spiritual forces, and spiritual forces stand at no physical barriers. We have a soul, a great nervous system. Children of God for many reasons, and very often after a time of pouring out spiritually, will find their nerves are all a jangle, and they feel anything but good and holy. But are you going to say that that means that after all they are not children of God, and that it is all a myth? Do you mean to say that Elijah was no longer the prophet of the Most High when he cast himself under the juniper tree and asked the Lord to take away his life? He was still the servant of God, still as true to God as ever. We are not trying to excuse our weaknesses, but trying to get to the heart of a situation. That does not argue that the Lord *has* forsaken, that the Lord is not there, and that such are not the Lord's children or His servants. It indicates that the enemy has made them marked men or women because of something he is trying to destroy in the life. If you get into that realm, do not accept the suggestions of the enemy or seek to interpret things in the light of circumstances.

If you do not understand this that we are saying, do not strive after an explanation, and please do not put your own construction upon it. There are some who know what it is to have such an assault upon their being, their physical and nervous life, as to make them feel that they are lost. I do not believe that it means that they are lost, and it is because some people accept that suggestion from the tempter that they sink into darkness. Oh, that many of these people who feel this thing upon them could know what we are trying to say, that it is for the spirit to rise up in faith and refuse the argument of the seeming! The seeming is sometimes so terribly real. People who have not suffered sometimes say to us: 'It only seems to be so; it is not really so!' And we reply: 'You do not know what you are talking about! It is more real than anything else to those concerned.' But the Lord will teach us as we go on not to accept that as the final thing. There is something deeper than that. The Lord is

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deeper than our physical feelings. The Lord is deeper than our soul.

Let me say here what I have said elsewhere. There are times and situations when ordinary lines of communication with a child of God are suspended. They are in a state of unconsciousness. It is useless to speak to them, for they can make no response.

But if you pray, so often there is a response, not in words, but deeper than natural consciousness. You touch something deeper; it is the spirit, and spirit responds to spirit. We have known this to happen, even to the point of a hand-squeeze, or a facial glow. It is the mystery of Divine life.

(To be continued)

THE WILL OF GOD IN RELATION TO HIS PEOPLE (III)

3. SEEING THE LORD JESUS

“Therefore . . . let us run . . . looking off unto Jesus the author [or captain, or file-leader] and perfecter of our faith” (Hebrews xii. 1, 2).

That is the point at which we have now arrived, and, as I have said, I want to gather all that up with one other great essential to going on with God.

I WANT to try to gather up and focus the ministry of these messages, taking you back to the beginning and reminding you that we pointed out that the whole Bible, in every part, is concerned with the will of God; which means that, as the Bible is the Word of God, the will of God is only to be found in the Word of God. Then we pointed out that the Bible introduces God to us as a ‘going’ God, a God moving *in* and *with* purpose. He is in action from the first verse: “In the beginning God created” (Genesis i. 1), and all the way through the Bible He is seen to be pressing onward in purpose and revealing Himself, and that purpose, in His Word. So the Word of God has to govern everything if the purpose of God is to be fulfilled and completed.

We moved on to see that, in order to be in that full, comprehensive will of God with purpose, it is necessary for us to have no purpose of our own, and so we dwelt upon the great law of spiritual progress—the law of letting go; the law of renunciation of all unto God. We mentioned three factors for a true beginning:

(1) That we are supremely concerned to know the will of God;

(2) That we are quite prepared at least to listen to and consider anything that might help us to know the will of God, being open-hearted and open-minded;

(3) That we are committed to do what the Lord shows us as to that will.

CAUGHT UP IN THE GOINGS OF GOD

Let me say this. In the presence of such a great deal of misapprehension and inadequate understanding in the world as to what Christianity is, I would say that Christianity really is that persons are caught up in the goings of God. The Apostle Paul used the word “apprehended”, and this is what he meant. He had been apprehended of Christ, and Christ was going on, moving forward—and how true that was at that time! In the early days of the Book of the Acts it is so evident that He was a forward-moving Christ. There was a great forward movement from heaven, and this man was caught up, and carried on in that going as one under arrest.

That is what Christianity is. It is not just a little thing. It contains many things, but what it really amounts to is that you and I have been caught up in something; we have been taken hold of. There is a very interesting word in the New Testament which is just this very thing. It comes in the betrayal of Jesus, when the band of people came out to arrest Him, and there is a clause which says: “And *they that had laid hold of Jesus* led him away” (Matthew xxvi. 57). You can see what kind of men they were! They were pretty tough, and to be in their grasp and grip would certainly be something that was not easy to resist. Again, it is the same word as the Apostle Paul used when he said: “The love of Christ *constraineth* us” (II Corinthians v. 14), and the word just means that we are taken hold of

and irresistibly carried on. There was the woman who touched the hem of Jesus' garment for healing, and He said: "Who is it that touched me?" The disciples said: "Master, the multitudes *press* thee" (Luke viii. 45). That, again, is the same word. Have you ever been in a mob, a crowd, a multitude that is *going*? There is plenty of that sort of thing today! There is a rushing multitude, and when you get in, what can you do but go? It is no use trying to resist. And Christianity is just being caught up in the eternal going of the eternal God, in Christ, by the Holy Spirit, and being mastered and irresistibly carried on.

I am very careful that you should get the point, for this is a law of progress. That may seem very obvious, but we need to see the principle of it.

You know the content of this Letter to the Hebrews. What does it do right at the beginning? It gathers up everything of all the goings of God. It gathers up all the previous movements and goings of God—"God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners"—and focuses them in His Son, Jesus Christ—"hath at the end of these days spoken", not by bits and pieces, not here and there, by divers portions and manners, but focused, concentrated, consummated, fully and finally, "*in his Son*." Then the writer goes on to tell us what Jesus Christ is, and who He is. This wonderful Christ that is being presented is greater than all the angels, greater than the law, greater than Moses, and greater than everything. Then the writer uses the metaphor of a race, a going. We are caught up in something as in a race, and what is it that is governing this movement, this race, all this energy? "Looking unto *Jesus*"—it is this wonderful Jesus about whom he has been writing. He is the full and consummate embodiment of Divine purpose into which we are called and caught up.

What does this say to us? We have used a lot of words, but what does it all mean?

Dear friends, it is a law, amongst the others, of *going*. This Letter is full of phrases such as: 'Let us go on', 'let us leave the beginning and go on', 'let us . . . let us . . . let us be caught up in something that makes us shed every impeding, arresting and hindering thing.' What is it that carries us on? We have seen the Lord Jesus! We have had a vision, not objectively, perhaps, but something has happened in our hearts and Jesus Christ has become the all-mastering, all-controlling and all-absorbing object of our existence. We have *seen* Jesus, and that vision carries us on. What we have seen about Him, what God's purpose is in Him, what we have seen in Jesus has become a dynamic in our life, and

such a dynamic that nothing else matters. 'Let us lay aside this', for this does not matter. 'Let us lay aside that . . . and that . . . and *that*', for they are not *the* thing. *This* is it—what we have seen of God's will, in its fullness, as comprehended in His Son for us. All that He is is for us.

"THE SIN THAT DOTHSO EASILY BESET US"

You know, we have not yet really grasped the Lord Jesus. I say that meaningfully and knowingly. Oh, how many of our worries would go if only we had seen the Lord Jesus! How many of those delaying, arresting things in our life would go if only we had seen the Lord Jesus! What is it that is holding us back? What is "the sin that doths so easily beset us"? What is it that is slowing us in the race, or even holding us up? 'Oh, this terrible, sinful thing that I am! This wretched man that I am! This poor thing, so weak, sinful and faulty. I think about this, I dwell upon that, and what happens? I stop running! All the "go" goes out of my being!'

You stop and think about yourself for five minutes, and see how fast you will run forward in the Lord! Oh, yes, we all do it. We are overwhelmingly obsessed with this terrible, poor, miserable thing that we are! We dwell upon it, and then we flop down—and the race is at an end for us while we are there. We have not seen the Lord Jesus!

In Him we have been dismissed. In His death we have been put out of sight. In Him risen we no longer appear before God, for He appears for us as us. He *is* us. *That* is seeing Jesus! If only we could get hold of that! If only we could get hold of Him! If only our eyes really did see what God has made Him to be for us—"Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who is made unto us wisdom from God" (I Corinthians i. 30). Not dwelling upon our own foolishness and folly, but "unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." What more do you want? That comprehends everything in redemption and unto glory! "Looking *off* unto Jesus."

Do you see what I am trying to say? The writer of this Letter to the Hebrews sees us as in a race, and he says that if we are going on in this we have to see Jesus, and keep Him always in view; not by seeing ourselves and other people all the time, but keeping our eye on Him. Then we will keep going, but if we do not keep Him in view, then we will stop going.

That is very plain, very simple, but it is the Gospel concerning God's Son, Jesus Christ.

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VISION ESSENTIAL TO PROGRESS

You and I, dear friends, individually, and if we belong to a company of the Lord's people, that company, will only make progress toward that full, ultimate end of God in Christ if we have a spiritual vision of Jesus Christ. Vision is essential to progress. Is it necessary for me to stay with the word 'vision'? I am not thinking about something objective that you see with your eyes of flesh. It is something that has happened inside of you, and your inner spiritual eyes have been opened. You can say: 'I have *seen*, and that has revolutionised my life. That has put me on my feet. That has set me on a course. That has become a dynamic in my life which, *in spite of myself*, keeps me going.' Yes, thank God, it works like that. I know the aspect, the factor, of our responsibility, but God help you and me if it is all going to be left to our responsibility and what we do! I tell you—and this may have been your experience, or it may interpret your present experience—many, many times I would have given up the race. That is an awful confession! Indeed, many times I have given it up in my heart. It became so difficult that I could go no further, so I gave up. It was not, therefore, my persistence that enabled me to go on, but what the Apostle calls "the power that worketh in us". What is that? The Holy Spirit has put a dynamic in us and we have *seen*. We cannot un-see! We cannot go back. The seeing may fade, and it may even be eclipsed by days of darkness and trouble. We may know what Paul meant when he said: "We were pressed out of measure, beyond our strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life" (II Corinthians i. 8). That was a terrible thing for the greatest of all apostles to say! What happened? Did Paul give up and say: 'Well, I cannot go on!'? No, not at all! "The power that worketh in us" got him on his feet again and again. Let Elijah seek out his juniper tree and say: 'Take away my life!', but the Lord does not agree. He has given Elijah a part in his great, eternal purpose, and so he will come up again.

Be encouraged! Are you down? Are you despondent? Are you despairing? Are you feeling you cannot go on? You will come up again, for something has taken place. I am calling it 'vision', but that may be misleading. What I mean is that something has come into our life which is a spiritual knowledge and has become a spiritual dynamic, giving us a sense of purpose, God's purpose. It is something that God has done, and that is going to be the secret of our survival, at least. But for that we will not survive. We will not get through on any resource of our own, but we will go on in the going

of the eternal goings of God if there has been this initial seeing of God's purpose in Jesus Christ.

Oh, I do wish with all my heart that in the preaching of the Gospel to the unsaved the note of the eternal purpose was more often struck! The Gospel is generally presented from the point of view of what we are going to get. The appeal is to our souls, that we will have something that will make us happy. That is the whole set-up: being happy! No, you will not get much of a Christian by that means, but you will if those who have come to the Lord have come because they have seen something of the greatness of Jesus Christ, and of their calling in Him; if they have had this vision which has produced a sense of vocation, a sense of mastering purpose. Without that we will not get very far in the race! It is that which the Apostle means, though he speaks in symbolic language. Do not just dwell upon the literal idea. The spiritual motivation is "looking off unto Jesus", who started it and will finish it. He is the author, the file-leader, and the perfecter. It did not begin with us, thank God! How many times we have been rescued by that word of the Lord Jesus: 'You did not choose Me. I chose you. I initiated this thing and I will complete it, if you will let Me, if you will fall in to this going, if you will keep your eye on Me, and off the things that delay and arrest this vision'—or whatever word you may use for the idea, the principle, the law, this something that has taken hold of you, and you know it is that which is carrying you on.

Have you got that? Are you a Christian of that sort? I am not asking you if you had a Damascus Road experience, when the whole thing was visual, ocular and sensational, but whether something has happened so that, if you wanted to put it into words, you would say: 'Well, I have come to see Jesus Christ, and in Him my eternal destiny has been bound up.' Do you see what I mean, what I am trying to say? A mastering motivation has been brought into us, and upon us, by Jesus Christ at the beginning that will make us Christians that go on in this race with patience. Have you got a mighty, Divine imperative in your life?

I wish I could get this home! After all your troubles, trials, temptations and difficulties, are you prepared to give up, to abandon everything and say: 'I am not going on with this any longer!'? Well, sit down and try! I venture to say that you will not get very far with that! You may have two or three miserable days over it, but sooner or later you will say: 'It is no use; I have to go on!' That is what I mean by vision—this sense of a God of purpose having laid hold of us to carry us on.

This is exactly what is meant by inspiration. The

Lord's people ought to be inspired people, which is only another way of saying 'inspired'. And, because of that, they ought to be an inspiration to others. Oh, if we are not an inspiration to others there is something seriously lacking in the very nature of our Christianity! If we cannot inspire others, if we cannot bring in inspiration in our ministry and our contacts, in our leadership, then that is a contradiction in terms, because the idea in the Bible of leadership is inspiration, inspiring people. If you are leading a meeting you ought to inspire people, in whatever kind of meeting it is.

And what should be true of the individual should also be true of every company. They should be a company of people who are being carried on by this mighty Divine dynamic of purpose, or vision. 'We *know* where we stand. We *know* where we are going, and what we are after.' Many of the Lord's people today do not seem to know where they are going, or where they are. No assembly ought to be like that! They ought to be a 'going' company, and everybody ought to know that those people have seen something and are mastered by something that is carrying them on, something that is a real force in their being.

VISION ESSENTIAL FOR UNITY

Such a vision has many side-effects and values, one of which is the resolving of the whole question of unity. And what a question that is! I hardly know what to say and what not to say, for there is so much. Take up the first Letter to the Corinthians, and what have you there? People with internal dissensions, divisions and quarrellings, and anything but unity and oneness. Paul knew it well before he went to them, and so he said: "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (I Corinthians ii. 2). To him that was the one all-unifying thing—a focused vision of Jesus Christ and His Cross.

If you have this what I am calling 'vision', this dominating sense of purpose and meaning given by the Lord, it will resolve so much of this trouble manifested in divisions and lack of real fellowship. A vision of Jesus Christ is a unifying dynamic.

We go to the Old Testament for an illustration. Take the case of Nehemiah. Well, Nehemiah had a vision. He was a man of vision. He saw Jerusalem rebuilt, with the wall reconstructed and made complete. He had a vision of this new Jerusalem on the earth for that time, and he was a man who was tremendously mastered by his vision. Then all these poor people—and they were a bedraggled remnant!—came back, with all the possibilities of more

disintegration, murmurings and quarrellings to hinder the realisation of this thing that had mastered this man. But what? They shared his vision! They were gathered up into it. They met persecution, opposition, and everything that could deter them, but the verdict was: "The wall was finished . . . in fifty and two days" (Nehemiah vi. 15). Why? Because the people had a mind to work. And what was that mind? Well, it was this vision of the purpose which had been put into the heart of this man and which unified the people. Let the devil come along and do everything that he can to discourage and make difficulty! He even tried the subtle ruse of trying to get Nehemiah to come and have a conference in order to discuss things. 'No!' said Nehemiah, 'Not on your life! I am doing a great work and I will not come down there.' You see the power of a mighty objective, a vision, to unify, to energise, to keep going? Do we not need that? Does not Christianity need that? Do we not need it in our assemblies? We do indeed need something like that, so we must have this new apprehension of God's purpose and will as centred in His Son concerning us, a mighty, animating power in life that is (as I have said and want to say again) more powerful than all our capacity for giving up and being discouraged and resigning. It is more powerful than all the weaknesses of our own souls.

Oh, I do thank God for survival! That is a weak word, I know. It is not enough to say that we survive, for we are doing more than surviving, but in order to survive all this that is against us, there must be something more than ourselves. The Word says: "God is greater than our heart" (I John iii. 20), and we have proved that many times. Our hearts have fainted and wellnigh given up the struggle, but He is greater than our hearts.

VISION AN EMANCIPATING POWER

This thing, call it vision or what you will—you know what it means now!—is a mighty emancipating power. I use that word in this sense: it is a great power for lifting us out of our smallness, our narrowness, our littleness.

In illustrating this we will take up our good friend who supplies us with so much instruction in this matter in his own history, the Apostle Paul. You know, dear friends, that the cause of the old Israel's calamity, first of all of being sent into Babylon and captivity for seventy years, and then eventually being dismissed by God, was because of exclusiveness. There is no other answer. 'We are *the* people. The truth will die with us. No one else

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has any place at all. We are it, and only we are it. These nations, the Gentiles, are mere dogs. There is no place for them in the Divine economy! We are the chosen people, God's elect, and no one else.' This was in spite of all the prophecies of what they were meant by God to be to the Gentiles, to the nations. They were to be the seed in which all the nations were to be blessed, but in spite of that covenant with Abraham, they had closed in on themselves until they were the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end. It was exclusiveness, and Paul the Apostle was a representative of that. He was born and brought up in that, trained in it, imbibing it from his childhood. He was an embodiment of that pharasaic exclusiveness. What are you going to do with a man like that? Try argument, and see how far you will get. He will out-argue you! Try persuasion. No, not a bit of it! He is not the kind to be persuaded. He is a bigot in this! Try persecution. It makes no difference. You will not move that man! He is shut in to this exclusive position—but the thing is done. He is emancipated, and the old Israel is no longer his parish. The *world* is his parish. How vast is the range of his vision now! You cannot cope with his language about this! He leaps over all language barriers because of what? *He has seen Jesus Christ!* He had a vision, and not only has he seen Him in the incident of the vision of a Person, but he has seen the significance. He has seen what Jesus Christ means in God's universe, in God's economy, in God's goings from eternity to eternity. You cannot be exclusive if you have seen Jesus Christ! That would dissipate and ruin all exclusiveness. You cannot be mean, contemptible and small if you have seen Jesus Christ!

Do you not agree with me when I say that this presentation of Christ in His infinite greatness is the only way to emancipate people from their littleness in their spiritual life? Is that not needed today? Oh, indeed it is! It is unifying, because we have one central Object which draws us together and makes us say to about one-thousand-and-one things that would hinder: 'You get out of the way! We are set upon this purpose of God, and we are going on.' It is unifying, emancipating and enlarging. Oh, that the Lord would give us this emancipation again, and enlarge us! The Psalmist

says: "I will run the way of thy commandments when thou shalt enlarge my heart" (Psalm cxix. 32), and enlargement of heart will make you fleet of foot in the ways of the Lord.

VISION THE GREAT BATTLEGROUND

Vision is the great battleground of all time. Oh, if you have seen you will be a marked person. If your eyes have been opened you will know something of what that fellow knew when the Lord opened those eyes that had been blind from his birth. It is all so true to life! He had his eyes opened and said: "Whereas I was blind, now I see" (John ix. 25). "This one thing I know, and you cannot rob me of that!" But it was not long before he was excommunicated from the synagogue. He was cut off and made an object of the Pharisees' spite.

That is true to spiritual experience. If you have seen you are in the battle. You will not be troubled very much by the devil if you have not got this dynamic in you, because it is this dynamic which spells his final overthrow. You have to count for God, and you only do so by having seen; and when you have seen you are marked, and there is a battle on. Anything to destroy you, to get you out of the race and out of the battle will ensue!

How are we going to end? What are you praying? I will tell you what I am praying! After all these years I am praying with all my heart: 'Lord, reveal Thy Son in me more than ever. Give me yet a larger apprehension and comprehension of the meaning of Jesus Christ!' Will you go and pray that? Will you seek the Lord continually that He will enlarge and strengthen your apprehension of Jesus Christ so that, figurative language or not, this is what it is in actuality: 'Looking off unto Jesus, all that He means, all that He contains, all that He represents of God concerning us, the File-leader, the Perfecter, the Completer, the Beginning and the End.' Pray that Christ seen in the heart becomes this dominating-power in our lives which saves us from all that would bring us into despair.

"I have seen the face of Jesus,
Tell me not of aught beside!"

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