

**A WITNESS
AND
A TESTIMONY.**

[Redacted]

1944

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A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY.

"A Candlestick
of Beaten
of Pure Gold:
Work"

Exodus 25. 31

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

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A bi-monthly ministry by which it is sought to lead the Lord's people into His full thought for them.

"A Witness and Testimony"

Maintained
by the offerings of
those who are helped by it.

JANUARY—FEBRUARY, 1944

NO. 1, VOL. 22

EDITOR'S LETTER

BELOVED OF GOD,

As we pass over another landmark of years, we would record our gratitude to the Lord for all that He has been to us and enabled us unto, both directly, and through His people, until now. We can truly say that "if it had not been for the Lord," we had been swallowed up. There is no doubt that the enemy hates with a bitter hatred that for which we are standing. It would be difficult to think of any fresh ways in which he could seek our quenching, although doubtless he has them. But "having received help from God we continue until now". If we want witness borne that the Lord is with us and for us, it is mainly found in this, that, although we have nothing on the natural side to support and substantiate us, we have not been destroyed, though all hell seems to have been moved against us, both in spiritual ways and by many outward means. We can simply echo the words, "The witness is this, that God hath given unto us eternal life..."

Not only have we been kept alive as an instrument and a ministry (I refer to that which is corporate, not merely personal), but there has been continual growth. Despite the restrictions and limitations of a fourth year of war—in a country so much affected—there has been a steady increase in the calls upon all that is available, so that the past year has seen more literature going out, and more demands for the "Witness and Testimony" than in any previous year.

I want to thank all those friends near and far who have written such appreciative letters and sent so graciously to our help. They are a large company extending over a very considerable area, as a glance at a year's "Acknowledgements" will show. U.S.A., many parts; India, Australia, New Zealand, Shanghai, Canada, Egypt, Venezuela, Paraguay, Nova Scotia, Switzerland, Brazil, Argentina, Ireland, etc., etc. We remember you all and thank the Lord for your fellowship.

But for our strongly adhered to position and principle not to take any line that would represent a separate and particular "movement" or "work" as something in itself, and apart from all else that is truly of the Lord, we should often make reference to what the Lord is doing; but we deliberately seek to give ourselves to our ministry, and leave all that side of things with Him. On His part, He does not allow us to have our glorying in any "thing", but in *Himself* alone. But we thank Him for what we do know of His doings in so many lives and places. So much for that; we praise the Lord for Himself, His work, and His people.

Now it is in my heart to set down as concisely as possible a summary of the major matters of the position to which the Lord has brought us, and the ministry which we feel He has committed to us. That ministry is the outcome of His very deep and drastic dealings with us. It is not something studied and worked out mentally. We are never off the wheel as a vessel finished, but somehow the Lord combines the moulding and the using. Surely this is as it should be. "The Lord's messenger in the Lord's message" contains the vital principle that the instrument should never be in advance of its spiritual history. Even prophets who spoke of things to come, and of many things the meaning of which was not *fully* clear to them, were made to have their ministry inwrought by practical experience. But the drastic handling is ever unto increase and progress. Such a ministry cannot be "taken up", or adopted. We cannot go into it as we go into any other kind of work, by technical or intellectual training or instruction. Indeed, it is something from which to shrink *naturally*, as did Moses, Jeremiah, and others. It is helpful and interesting or enlightening to see that, when the Lord spoke through Jeremiah to Israel about the potter's house, and the potter, and then Himself took the place of the potter, the moulding, shaping, correcting, adjusting, purging, unto usefulness was by means of the assaults and inlielings of enemy activity. There was a connection between the Potter's hands and a foreign opposition and besieging. So for fuller usefulness the Lord uses the enemy and his work, and we are

not for long free from this pressure. This ministry has been going on for a good many years now, and the message has been given in a considerable number of issues of the magazine.

What then is the framework into which all this is gathered? It can be found in intimation in one comprehensive statement given to saints for this dispensation:

“ HAVING MADE KNOWN UNTO US THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL...TO SUM UP ALL THINGS IN CHRIST...ACCORDING TO THE PURPOSE OF HIM WHO WORKETH ALL THINGS AFTER THE COUNSEL OF HIS WILL...HE PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS (CHRIST'S) FEET, AND GAVE HIM TO BE HEAD OVER ALL THINGS TO THE CHURCH, WHICH IS HIS BODY, THE FULNESS OF HIM THAT FILLETH ALL IN ALL ” Eph. i. 9-11, 22).

There are three main parts to that statement.

1. The eternal will and purpose of God.
2. Christ as the centre of that purpose.
3. The Church, which is His Body, the vessel of the full expression of the purpose—that is, of Christ.

We are shown God in eternal counsels purposing. In outlining and devising His intentions to create and constitute “ *all things* ”, “ in the heavens and upon the earth ” (Eph. i. 10), He was moved and governed by a specific and definite purpose. This “ *Purpose* ” is mentioned a number of times in the New Testament, and various things are shown to be related to it. It is most important that we recognise that, however many phases there may be in Divine activity, the purpose of God is one. Nothing is an end in itself. The first law of spiritual *fulness* (and be it observed that fulness is what is in view) is to apprehend the fact and nature of God's all-governing purpose. It is an impressive and painful fact that there is very, very little of what is associated here with the Lord that is really marked by spiritual fulness. Smallness, weakness, limitation, poverty, defeat, ignorance, immaturity, and disappointment characterise so many of the Lord's people, and so much of the Lord's work. This is one of the things that is causing so much distress, inquiry, and effort in some quarters.

May not the explanation be that *nothing that is only a part of a whole can reach and realise the whole purpose*? To be in the way of fulness it is essential that, in the first place, we recognise and realise that God is not just a Busybody in a large number of good and merciful activities; but that He is wholly occupied with one all-inclusive, and all-related purpose! “ Who worketh ALL THINGS after the counsel of his own will.” The measure of ultimate attainment and accomplishment will be according to our initial apprehension of a single purpose. When that is established, we shall soon move on to see what the purpose is, and how—and by what means—it will be realised. If a master-man has a single purpose to which he has abandoned himself, he will require that all who work for him are not just doing various things, however good they may be, even as parts of his whole work, but that they are seeing beyond their own job and part to the whole end and object, and are working positively to that. He will be favourable to any who come to work for him, and to any means employed, only in so far as the full purpose is in their heart. The measure of his resource and fulness will be given on this basis alone. So it is with God. But let it be understood that it is *spiritual* fulness that is in view, not personal gratification.

Then the purpose is to sum up all things in Christ. It is a Person filled full, enlarged, and all-comprehending. The greatness, the magnificence, the universal fulness of Christ is God's goal. Again, it is not sufficient that we see the purpose, basic as that is, but that we see—in an ever-growing way—the fulness of Christ. There must be an initial seeing of this greatness, this majesty, this glory, this universality. It was such a seeing that accounted for the power, effectiveness, and glory of the Church's first days. That was the meaning of “ Pentecost ”. It was such a seeing that made the Apostles the men that they were. Paul owed everything to God's revealing of His Son in him. But that seeing must go on. It must become ever fuller. We must not just date our seeing of Christ to some past experience. It is the Lord's will that we shall so live in and walk by the Spirit that we are able to say that what we see of Christ to-day is infinitely greater and more wonderful than ever it has been. That is only in line with God's *purpose*, and it is so for all who have truly come into a spiritual apprehension thereof.

Then in the third place we move to see God's method and means of fulfilling His eternal purpose. This is by way of “ the church, which is His (Christ's) body ”. The Church is definitely stated to be “ the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.” That universal fulness of Christ is determined to be revealed and expressed in and through a vessel called the Church.

What is this Church?

Firstly, it is said to be an elect company of people. Leaving all theories of election, let us be content, for the moment, to see that God has eternally determined to have such a company, and that election is related to purpose, not primarily—if at all—to salvation. God knows, He cannot help knowing, the ultimate reactions of people to His presentations, and *according to His foreknowledge* He has foreordained to His purpose. But God has never said to any *unsaved* person that he or she is so foreordained. He only calls. The Church is the company of the called who obeyed.

Secondly, the Church is something greater than the churches. Whatever we may mean by the latter, the Church may be in them all, or it may not be in many of them at all. The Church is essentially a spiritual thing; not sectarian, denominational, “ ecclesiastical ”, traditional, etc. It is the spiritual relatedness as of a

living organism ; a body possessing *one life* ; it is a single entity, an "all one in Christ." The measure of light does not make for a more or less membership of that Body, although that may affect functioning. The apprehension of "Church Truth" does not constitute Church membership, although it will greatly affect the matter of fulness. Vital relatedness to Christ is the basis of Body actuality.

But when we have said that, we *must* point out *how* important the recognition of the Church is. Next to the revelation of Christ personally in His greatness, the revelation of the Church is bound up with our practical progress toward fulness. Paul has a far greater fulness in his writings than any other Apostle, and this is mainly due to the specific revelation of the Church which was given to him. What arises from this revelation is that Christ and the Church are one, as Head and members of one Body.

There are one or two things which arise for our apprehension in this matter. Firstly there is the fact—so clearly and fully given in the Scriptures—that God has just as definitely chosen and appointed the Church for the realisation of His eternal purpose as He has chosen and appointed His Son. He has just as positively bound Himself and His fulness to the one as to the other. While one is subject to the other, and the medium and vessel of the other—as the wife to the husband (Eph. v. 22-24), they are one in the matter of purpose. This carries with it the jealousy of God for His Church, and means that for fulness there can be no allowing of an ignoring, belittling, or injuring.

Further ; God will keep strictly—in the matter of spiritual fulness—to working Bodywise. That is, it is *not possible* for any units as such to know fulness. Fulness is a related matter. "The church is the fulness of him." No individual can be that. Therefore spiritual oneness, inter-relatedness, fellowship, mutuality, and interdependence are basic and indispensable to spiritual attainment of full-growth. "Till *we all* attain unto...a full grown man, unto...the fulness of Christ" (Eph. iv. 13).

In the Old Testament, when things were constituted according to the heavenly pattern, God spoke out of the Tent of Meeting. So it is in the New Testament. For the answer to his inquiry on the Damascus Road, Paul had to go into the city and get it as out from the Church. For the entering upon his great life-work he had to abide in the Church at Antioch and get his commission confirmed there (Acts xiii). All this does not mean that God has never sovereignly and in grace moved without the recognition of this law by those concerned for His interests, but we are speaking of spiritual fulness, and our ministry is concerned with *that*. It is not a committee, "General", "Executive", or "Advisory", but the "Body" in representation and spiritual functioning that is God's ordained way.

It would take much more space than we have at our disposal to set forth all the values and implications of an apprehension of God's place and purpose for His Church in all things. This is one of the matters which has had a considerable place in our spoken and written ministry through these past years.

This leads on to the churches ; that is, the local companies of God's people. Times and conditions have changed greatly since New Testament days ; that is, so far as the Western world is concerned. It was simple and straightforward to gather together believers in Christ in those times ; there were only believers and non-believers. To-day numerous other questions arise ; such as "Connection", "Order", "Practice", "Belief" etc. But there are one or two things which must still govern this matter : they are

1. The local church or assembly is intended to be locally all that the Church as a whole is universally. It must not be smaller in its vision, its vocation, its relatedness. Though locally placed, it is universal in nature, outreach, concern, and function. If it lives unto itself it will die. Fulness is dependent upon its *spiritual* length and breadth, and height and depth.
2. The local church is the spiritual training-ground for all usefulness to the Lord. There all the essential lessons are learned, not by teaching alone, but by spiritual discipline. The very vital lesson of subjection to the Lord—which means so much in the matter of spiritual growth—is learned in a very practical way in a true assembly and fellowship life. All independent, unrelated, and merely personal life is impossible when the "Body" is truly recognised.

The spiritual support, upholding, encompassing, and covering of the Lord's people in something more than a general way is of tremendous value and consequence. Far from the local church being but a "congregation" or a preaching place, it is intended to be a local expression of the family of God, and to fulfil all the functions and provide all the values of a true family life and relationship.

3. The matter of pre-eminent importance in the local church, as in the universal, is the absolute sovereign headship of Christ. Anything which usurps this, or in any way conflicts with it, will most certainly result in spiritual limitation and proportionate retarding of growth. Is this not why, in the New Testament churches, no one man exercised headship, but elders—not an elder—were appointed. The "Body" principle is upheld in the corporate, and individual sovereignty is prevented. At Antioch the "Holy Ghost said" *to a company of representative men*, who were together in spiritual responsibility. Eldership is representation—spiritual measure, not ecclesiastical. The New Testament plurality of Eldership means that the church is brought—as in and by its representatives—under the complete sovereignty of Christ through the Holy Ghost.

4. We must then see that the Apostles never set out with the plan to form churches. That was the spontaneous and necessitated result of the Holy Spirit's work in every place. Christ was preached and accepted, and relatedness spontaneously followed (see Acts ii. 42). That which decides churches is Christ. This is the solution of and the answer to many of the problems and questions which arise, especially in this Western world in these peculiarly complicated times. What is to be our guiding and deciding principle in gathering together? It is to be Christ! We meet on that ground alone. Where God's end is most fully in view, and what provides most fully for its attainment—the fulness of Christ—decides where we ought to be, and no one ought to quarrel with that. It is because of a devotion to and jealousy for some "thing"; a "Mission", "Deomination," "Tradition", "Fellowship", "Movement", etc., that rivalries, and bad feelings spring up. All the talk about "sheep stealing" and "dividing the Lord's people", or a great deal of it, arises out of a concern for—not spiritual growth—but something here on the earth. How very much of this talk would be impossible if everyone concerned took the attitude that it does not matter what survives or ceases to exist so long as Christ is being increased in a spiritual way. This involves the necessity that all the Lord's people, and particularly those in "official" positions, and positions of influence, should be utterly and only devoted to the increase of Christ. Christ is not divided, therefore Christ is the ground of unity, not the things as mentioned above.

Whose sheep are they? Are they ours? Can Christ's sheep be stolen by those who are devoted to Him? If they are sheep of this or that, then things are in another realm. No, all this sort of thing is the cause of spiritual weakness and smallness, and a new mind as to Christ Himself is needed for fulness.

Finally, in this connection, and for the moment; everything appointed by the Lord is intended to be for the direct and positive "building up of the body". That marks its object and direction, and its unifying law. Evangelism, Teaching, Gifts, personal and spiritual, etc., are all said definitely to be to this one end. The evangelist and evangelism are not an end in themselves, nor something apart. The New Testament overwhelms such an idea or procedure most completely. All these functions are "Body" functions, and for a well-balanced Body they must be kept together; neither emphasised to the detriment of the other; neither left out. A teaching ministry must go hand-in-hand with an evangelistic ministry; and the other way round. Everyone who functions as a member of Christ's Body—and all members *should* function—should have in view—not souls being saved, not saints being instructed, but—through these, and all other means, the increase of Christ. Let us remember that the Church is not large or small; our work is not more or less successful according to the *number* of people represented, but according to the positive measure of Christ.

I cannot close this review without a brief reference to one or two other matters which are vital to this ministry.

There is the matter of the Cross. It will not be saying anything fresh or unusual when we say that the Cross of Christ is deeply bound up with the question of Divine fulness. But how this is so demands a continuous re-emphasis and growing unfolding. The Scriptures make it quite clear that right to the very end the Adversary will seek with all his might and by every means to revive the question of acceptance and standing with God. He is seen very late in the day (Rev. xii) as the "accuser of the brethren", and the destruction of assurance is one of his most determined endeavours. Everything that carries with it the idea of our doing anything and making ourselves anything to obtain the mercy of God and attain unto acceptance with Him, bears the hall-mark of the Devil himself. Christ's death for us and our death with him is the only, but the sure ground of full acceptance! Luther said it very utterly when he put it thus—

"O Christ, I am Thy sin, Thy curse, Thy wrath of God, Thy hell; and contrariwise, Thou art my righteousness, my blessing, my life, my grace of God, my heaven."

No wonder the Devil hated Martin Luther and assailed him so bitterly.

But there is not only the basic, initial, perfect value of the Cross for our full and unquestioned acceptance; there is a meaning of the Cross in relation to spiritual fulness and fruitfulness. It is what Paul calls

"Being made conformable to his death" (Phil. iii. 10).

This, let us emphasise, must be kept apart from our justification and access to God. How very much of the tragedy, scandal, defeat, weakness, deadness, limitation and unloveliness of many Christian people and Christian institutions, communities and churches is due to uncrucified "flesh" or natural life! How greatly Christ is hidden from view by men and things and methods which bring themselves into prominence! The need, if He is to come to the place of the Divine intention, and we with Him, is for a continuous and ever-deepening working of the Cross in us. We really must be in a position to say "I have been crucified with Christ". Yes, but also to complete the statement "It is no longer I, but Christ". Is it true—"No longer I?" No...I"? That is what Paul meant, but who can know the depth of that "I". Only Christ knows how deep and thorough His Cross is, and we must hand ourselves over to Him for the Holy Spirit to work all *His* meaning of the Cross in us, if the way is to be clear for His fulness:

So the twofold meaning and message of the Cross is a very strong part of this ministry. There are many who do not like the latter and will not have it. We can only say that if they represent something far more than the average in spiritual wealth and their apprehension of Christ, and if that with which they are con-

ected is free from the common results of the strength of the natural life ; then there is something in their antagonism to the subjective meaning of the Cross to which we must give heed. But we have been there ourselves, and know the difference.

We must close, and we do so with a reference to one other matter. Many may agree with much that we have written, but they will react to it by saying that it is "idealistic"; it is too high; as things are now it is not possible; we cannot hope for such a recovery. Well, there is one answer to that attitude. The Bible has always recognised and provided for a position like that. It was but a small number of the captive nation of Israel who returned voluntarily to rebuild the city, the wall, the house at Jerusalem, and the word which governed and characterised them was, "Whoso is of a willing heart, his God be with him."

In the book of the Revelation it is clear that the majority had left the full thought of the Lord. The appeal there is to those within who have "an ear to hear". We find them called "Overcomers", and this clearly relates to the decadent conditions; a reaction to the Lord's full and original thought. It is hardly to be expected that all Christians will respond to the appeal and standard, but it is clear that they *can*, the Lord wills it, and what He wills is not out of the question. It may be a costly way; and the cost will be mainly acute because of the attitude of other Christians.

Hence, we realise that this ministry will sift the Lord's people, and only those who really mean business with God and to "go on to full-growth" will have a place for it. Our message is therefore one which will affect the "Overcomers," although we do not regard them as an elect of the elect, a select spiritual aristocracy. They will have a place of special honour because in them the Lord will have that upon which His heart has been set from the beginning. The difference will be that which is seen ultimately between Joseph and his brethren.

These, then, are the main things to which we are called and committed. "Here we stand, we can do no other, God help us."

The Lord give you all a heart to "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth," and to reach unto His fulness.

Yours in this quest and testimony,
and with greetings in our Lord Jesus,

T. AUSTIN-SPARKS

The Man God Approves

(continued)

A Walk Before God

This matter of character is the thing upon which everything really hangs. I do not think the Lord will put His call in front of anybody who has not been approved in the background of his life. Here is where we come to the more important matter. Ministry is a matter of proved character first. You remember in Peter's message at Pentecost we have these words, "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you". How is it that can be said of Him? Because for thirty years, from birth to full manhood, this Man has been living before God a certain kind of life, and God has been noting the character that has been formed in this One. He has been approved of God in those thirty years in the background of His life, and now God entrusts to him a ministry, and says of Him, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased". Jesus of Nazareth came into His ministry on precisely the same ground that we come into ours, namely, as approved in the background, and then anointed by the Spirit.

Now Paul says that is how he himself came into his ministry—"as we have been approved of God to be intrusted with the gospel, so we speak". Paul was under the eye of God before ever he got his commission to preach. And doubtless this was the case not merely from the moment of his being saved until he started in a public way to minister, but all through the

background years, even in those days of his unenlightenment. In writing to Timothy he gives thanks to God who counted him faithful, appointing him to His service, though he was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; and he goes on to say that he found mercy because he did it in ignorance (I Tim. i. 12-14). God's eye was on this man all those years. He was not seeing the grace of God, but He was having to do with a man who meant business with God. In his unenlightened days, Paul was serving God after his manner. He thought he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth (Acts xxvi. 9), but none the less it was his service to God. God's eye was on this man in the background of his life; and in summing up this matter Paul himself speaks of it thus: "so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God which proveth our hearts". I take it that really represents the whole summing up of Paul's background character. All through those years of his Jewish zeal, as well as the years of his Gospel zeal, he was a man who walked before God, and not man.

That is important, for that is what constitutes a man approved of God, of whom God says, I can trust a vocation to this man. In that parable the Lord spoke about the unfaithful steward (Luke xvi), He concludes the application of it thus: "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much:

and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?" I should have thought, on reading that, that the Lord meant, If you are not faithful with your own things, who will entrust to you other peoples' things? He does not say that. What is the point? It is the question of faithfulness, and the point here is that of a standard.

Paul is always telling us he has had a stewardship entrusted to him. The application the Lord makes of that story of the unfaithful steward is this: If you cannot be faithful with what is entrusted to you by somebody else, and for which you are responsible, for which you have to give an account, as an employee to a master, you will never be faithful when you are put in a position where you have your own things, where no account has to be given, and you are not responsible to anybody. I think that is a very practical point to take note of. Here is a man to whom God can entrust something, the Gospel, a ministry. Putting it just by way of illustration, we may put it like this—If, when we are employed by an employer, we cannot use his time honestly and faithfully, what will happen when God takes us as out of our employment and leads us into the ministry of the Gospel? There we have no legal employer, our time is our own, and there is no compelling clock to say, You must start at this hour and finish at that! Oh, beloved, the entrustment of our time and the life God has given us comes into this realm of faithfulness, and I suggest we need to take careful note whether in this realm we are faithful. God cannot call some people into His service where they would be free because they have not learned the discipline in an easier realm where they have to be working to the clock. There has not been the working out in that realm of an adequate measure of faithfulness. In certain realms where the Lord's service is concerned, we need to take note of this, that the Lord requires just as much diligence as does the employer in the office. But when we are in His service, we can get very slack and undisciplined in this realm. Am I giving the Lord honest return for the hours which He gives to me as my own that I may do with them what I will? It is a question of the diligence with which a man recognises his stewardship.

Righteousness—Outward and Inward

Paul goes on like this—"for neither at any time were we found using words of flattery". This is his description of himself. This is the kind of man to whom the Lord says, I can safely trust the Gospel to you. What did Paul do? He spoke the honest truth. Before men he was righteous and true. He was straight and honest in what he said to people. That is why I read John viii; a very harsh chapter if you judge it from the standpoint of the tender gracious words that so often fell from the Lord's lips. "Ye are of your father the devil!" There does not sound much

grace about that. No, the Lord was telling them the truth. I want to suggest that that which will qualify a man in God's sight so that God can say, I can trust this man, is that he is a man who is not a flatterer of other people, but who is prepared to stand with others on the ground of utter truth.

I would add, of course, the balancing word—"speaking the truth in love" (Eph. iv. 15). There are two sides to truth. Do not let us be unbalanced. I do find with Paul—and it was Paul who produced this kind of convert—there was a forthrightness about his Gospel which never smoothed over things which ought not to be smoothed over. Paul would say in Scripture terms, "All your righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isa. lxiv. 6); "ye must be born again" (John iii. 7). People have to be told there is no salvation apart from the Blood of Christ. In II Thessalonians, to these Christians who spiritually are mere babes in years, weeks old, Paul says, You know all about the things I told you, and how I warned you of the Lord coming in fearful wrath. He had given them the awful side of the Gospel, that if men reject the truth, then they will believe a lie, and God will send them a spirit of error. Paul had said, Either you accept Christ or you fall under a fearful snare of delusion, deception, and ultimately of eternal damnation. Either you are in Christ or out of Christ, and if you are out of Christ, you are on the way to perdition. That is downright language. It is not the language of a flatterer, not the language of a man who wants to please men. That is the sort of man who produces this kind of convert.

As I say, there is another side to this kind of preaching, namely, "trusting it in love". It is easy for some people to go with that stern kind of talk and very hard for them to come and say, My dear brother, I can bring you this message, that though you are a sinner there is hope for you; come God's way! There are the two sides. But we ought to try and recover this downrightness of the presentation of the truth.

It touches the whole realm of our converse with one another; in the matter of forgiving one another, for example. There is room for any amount of hypocrisy in that realm. The Lord wants truth in the inward parts in the matter of our relationships. We can be sitting at the Lord's Table with somebody who in our hearts we are despising. That is not inward and outward righteousness, that is deception. It is not truth. It comes under the category of flattering. It says, My dear brother, my dear sister, I greet you in the Lord's Name at His Table; and in my heart I am saying, I despise you! Is there anything of this that needs searching out among us? The man who can do that sort of thing, who can be guilty of that duplicity of attitude, of fair speech but inward despising, that man is not approved of God. Let not such a man expect God to say, I can trust you because what I see in you betokens your readiness. He says, That sort of thing rules out approval. Paul says, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God" (II Tim. ii. 15). Jesus Christ was a Man approved of God.

You know what lay back of His character when He

could stand before those Jews in John viii and say, "I proceeded for thand came from God"—"Ye are of your father the devil". How did He come to that boldness? Because in the years of His upbringing He

had allowed truth to govern Him in every part; no social lie ever came in. There must not be any of this attitude that is gathered up in that word "flattery".
(To be continued). G.P.

Christ Pre-eminent

An Abridged Message

READING: Phil. i. 3-6, 10; ii. 16, 20-21; iii. 7-12;
Rom. viii. 29, 18-19.

The Lord's Purpose

What a tremendous statement that is of Paul's in Eph. iv., where he says, "till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ". Then the Apostle says that, to that tremendous end and its realisation, everything is subservient. "We know that to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose" (Rom. viii. 28). Everything that happens is harnessed to this end, namely, the purpose. The "all things" that happen work together for good. It does not say that they are good, but they work together for good. They are all harnessed to the tremendous thing God is doing.

And then Paul continues, "For whom he fore-knew, he also fore-ordained to be conformed to the image of his Son". There is the heart of the matter. God is not doing a thousand things, He is doing one thing primarily, to get likeness, to get a form that is Christ. "Conformed to the image of His Son"! The Divine handling of our lives has that end in view, producing something that is not us, taking us beyond our own depth and capacity and getting Someone else in us. We all have our own ideas and the mighty hand of God precipitates us into situations beyond us, and we think everything has gone wrong. Then, after the darkness and after the eclipse, we just see a tiny bit more that He was right, and that what He did was right, and, though we may not be conscious of it, there may be a little more of His Son featured in us than there was before. What a painful way to have more of Christ! But, that is the way. Tribulation, famine, sword, 'killed all the day long'! That is the background.

Now we are here further let into the secret that the expectation of the whole travailing creation waits upon this process. In the Church there must be the reproducing of the Man in the glory, and then the two mighty things coalesce, the Son and the sons. The battle rages round that.

God's goal is a day when everything is Christ, and Christ is a bigger range than man is wont to conceive of, when he thinks of Him as just the Lord Jesus in His human earthly form, taking upon Himself our nature. Christ is the fulness of God; in Him were all things created. He is God's pattern for every-

thing in a way that we do not understand. Everything must be according to Christ. If it is not according to Christ it is to be ruled out. God's thought is Christ. Now, how you can have a whole creation in Christ is something our little minds do not understand, but we do know "if any man be in Christ, there is a new creation" (II Cor. v. 17). The thing has begun, and one day it is going to extend to the utmost bound of the circumference. It will be Christ filling all things.

So the Apostle has that great full end in view all the time, and that explains a lot. If we have not an end in view that is a worthy end, we have an unworthy and very aimless life. We need a goal, an object. The Apostle has seen the vision, and His answer has been quite final—"To me to live is Christ" (Phil. i. 21) Life is Christ! That is a big revelation, something we need the eyes of our heart opening to continually, that Christ may be more and other things less and less. That is God's end. It is producing Christ. He is to be everything and to fill all things, and the present sphere of that mighty working is, as we have said, the saints.

The Hindrance to the Lord's Purpose

That brings us to this solemn word in that 21st verse. As Paul with his tremendous yearning for Christ to have His full place moved to and fro, he was confronted with the fact that there were very few like-minded. "I have no man likeminded". He could not find sympathy for Christ being everything. He found there were other things people wanted, liked, preferred, thought, and this among saints who owed their very eternal life to Christ!

"I have no man likeminded, who will care truly for your state". Why? "For they all seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ". What is in the way of God's end being reached, whether a phase of His purpose in a local situation or in a life, or the ultimate thing breaking through? What is in the way of His speeding the day when this creation will be delivered? It is right down here in this word "All seek their own". It is a self-centred life. Wherever life is self-centred, the purpose is arrested. By self-centredness we do not mean that self is the only consideration. No; but self is at the centre. Everything focuses from self, and comes back to self. We can have a zeal, we can have very high and apparently holy concerns, but their centre, the source from which they move out, may be ourselves. Quite unconsciously to ourselves we may be standing for what

we see to be for the Lord or of the Lord, and the strength of it, the centre of it, is our own life. It is, after all, only my opinion. I may have very good grounds for it, but it is my opinion. Well then, it is my own thing, and the more sure I am that it is of the Lord, the more of a block it is to the Lord because I dig myself in. It is a life, the centre of which is not really Christ at all but myself.

The question is, how is self-centredness to be displaced by Christ-centredness? How can it ever be? Well, I am more and more sure it can never be merely by teaching. We can never change one another by the soundness of our doctrine. We all know the doctrine of the Cross quite well. Most of us have been brought up on Gal. ii. 20. There is nothing fresh about it. We all know that! That is what we are so keen on! Ah, how self-deceived! We have not been crucified at all. No, it is not by doctrine.

An Utter Attitude of Heart

Phil. iii gives us some light on the way of deliverance. The first answer is an utter attitude of heart. "The Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Sam. xvi. 7). What are you out for? Well, Lord, you know I am out for You! Yes, but not in my way. What meaneth the bleating of the sheep? (1 Sam. xv. 14). There is something I can hear that brings you and your self-interest into it. There is always about you this bleating going on. You just will not exist in your own esteem when you really see Christ. It will take the love and gentleness of others to bring you into the picture when I have finished with you, the Lord says. Oh, the terribleness of this upstanding nature of ours that thinks it is really seeking Christ! The Lord says, I want you to want Me to get My way, whatever it costs, and it will cost such an emptying out of you as you have no conception of.

If ever a man was emptied out of well-founded convictions it was the Apostle Paul. It was no flimsy structure that he had under his feet as Saul of Tarsus. He could meet you on matters of righteousness, indeed on matters of every kind, with an answer that was logical, and with all that background he had to part company, and the Lord firmly but gently said, That will go now, that and that, all that you hold dear will go! Paul says, I have counted it refuse that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness. Oh, for a broken and contrite spirit that is willing to be melted and not to keep a grip on things, willing to fit into the Divine sovereign order, willing to risk everything on the Lord in letting its own grasp on things go. For positive, onward movement, the Lord has to stand back; He waits for hearts broken at His feet.

Love

And then the other requisite for delivering us from our unconscious selfhood is love. "I have no man... that will care for your state". It reminds us of 1 Cor. xiii—"Love seeketh not her own". When Christ is central, our focus is immediately away from ourselves. "By this shall all men know that ye are my dis-

ciples, if ye have love one to another" (John xiii. 35). Not, if you judge one another, seek to put one another right, but, if you love one another. That is the whole thing. Love seeketh not her own.

And John's epistle is tremendous. Let us see to it, he says, that he who loves God, love his brother also (1 John vi. 21). What is love? Love is not sentiment. *Love is an outworking of life together*, and therefore that brings us to the heart of things again.

Apart from a life very much related to one another and very dependent on one another, we shall not know Christ in any fulness. That is what the Church represents; the utter inter-dependence of our lives in Christ. Apart from our "together life" we are all free lances, everyone of us. One thing Satan did in the Fall was to make every single man a unit, a self-governed unit. You put fifty self-governing units together and what do you get? You have chaos, or at any rate schism. A lot of apparent oneness we see nowadays is only superficial. It obtains only because of a certain discipline, habit of life and method that prevent lawlessness, but at heart each man is independent. The breaking of our independence is something that can only happen in corporate life, and it is the most painful experience you can ever go through. I think even physical suffering is nothing to be compared to having really to let go.

Subjection is a tremendously strong thing. It is meeting an issue where you are either going to give in and let go a whole point of view, or you are going to retain it; a mentality that is your mentality. We feel that if we have only the Lord to deal with, it is all right. Why should we have to yield to other people? That is exactly where our independent nature stands erect, and says, No; I will give in to the Lord, but not to anyone else! A word that comes to one's heart in connection with that is that word the Lord sent to John the Baptist, who was so perplexed by the strangeness of His dealings. All the Lord had to say was, Blessed is he, whosoever shall find none occasion of stumbling in me" (Matt. xi. 6). The Lord will take pains to put something across our path that will completely stumble us unless we see through it to the Lord. Many a child of God has been kept out of fulness and out of their function in the Body by their stumbling block. There is something I am not going to give in to, not going to take on! Gradually that life begins withering. I believe the Lord will get us to a place where we have no stumbling blocks where He is concerned. We come at length to a position where we say, If that is the way you are taking me, I am willing: it is very uncongenial to me, I do not understand it, but I must give in to it! If there is one thing in your life which, as you get to the Lord, or as you think about it, you say, That thing, never!—that is the thing. That is the thing upon which you have to give in. It is the one thing on which we say, No! We have to say, Yes, Lord; to You on that thing I give in, and I give in to that thing in Your Name! Some sort of crisis like that is what brings us into the reality of the Church.

I had to give in to things I did not agree with, but everything cornered down to that, and eventually it was either right through on that way or finish. Does not that show what we lack? Our own mind is enmity against God, and it will hold out against God. May the Lord find us breakable on our strongest point, because without it the strength of our own nature will always seek its own ends and be a menace to the things of Christ. If we have an utter heart, He will take us out of our depth, and the place to which He will take us is into corporate life, and there He will say, Submit yourselves one to another in the

fear of God (Eph. v. 21). Not, submit yourselves to God: but, submit yourselves to one another. You will find you have not been fighting for anything that was worth fighting for. And when you have yielded, you will discover you have been melted by that letting go and the love of God has come in. And what has happened? The day of Christ has been speeded, because there is more of Christ in you. This work of our conformity is painful, it is costly, but it is the only thing that matters. We are like colts untrained: He wants to break us in, break us down, fuse us into one living, loving expression of Himself.
C.J.B.H.

Spiritual Sight

No. 7

Seeing the Glory of Christ as Son of Man

READING: Heb. i. 1-2; ii. 5-18; iii. 1; II Cor. iv. 4-5.

In our previous meditation we were seeing the glory and significance of Christ as the Son of God, having vested in Him the prerogatives of God; firstly, the power of life; secondly, the power of light; and thirdly, the power of Lordship.

In this meditation we shall spend our time with another aspect of the glory of Christ, namely, the glory and peculiar significance of Christ as Son of Man. It is here also that we need spiritual sight. If men could really see from God's standpoint, with God's own knowledge and understanding, the Lord Jesus Christ as Son of Man, all the problems of this world would be solved: for really there is a sense in which all problems are solved when we see. And God's solution is His Son. Let us be found here this afternoon in our hearts waiting on the Lord that we might see. Let that be our attitude: to see Jesus in an inward way with the eyes of the heart enlightened, the Spirit of wisdom and revelation being given us in the knowledge of Him.

If I might say so here, I feel that the burden of our hearts should be that the eyes of the Lord's people should be opened first. Oh, if only their eyes were open, what different attitudes they would take, what great possibilities there would be for God, what a lot of things would disappear which are dishonouring to the Lord! If only they could see! Let us pray much that the eyes of the people of God may be opened. And then, to the end that the eyes of men at large might be opened, let us pray that there might be an eye-opening ministry like that of Paul—"... unto whom I send thee, to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light" (Acts xxvi. 17-18). Let us pray along such lines continually. That by the way.

The Arch-Type of a New Humanity

I think there are two or three particular aspects of Christ as Son of Man. Firstly, this is the human title of Christ, and it brings to us at once the con-

ception of Him as man, or as humanity, and the thing needed to be seen about the Lord Jesus is the Divine meaning in His humanity. As Son of Man it is not only that He has come alongside of us, taking flesh and blood, and so becoming a man, and just being here as a man among men. Oh no, that is not it. Moreover, that is dangerous, and that only goes a little way. True He is man, true He has become partaker of flesh and blood, but there is a difference, a vast and infinite difference. Humanity, yes; but not exactly our humanity. The significance of Christ as Son of Man is that He is an arch-type of a new humanity.

There are now in God's universe two humanities, whereas there was only one. The Adam humanity was the only one, but there is another humanity now, a different humanity; flesh and bone, but without the sinful nature of this humanity, without any of that which has estranged and alienated this humanity from God, without any of that which brought this humanity under judgment from God, a humanity upon which God, in His infinite holiness and perfection, can look with pleasure and utter satisfaction. "My beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased" (Matt. iii. 17). It is a Man, but such a man as is not common among men, but altogether different. The significance of Christ as Son of Man is that God has started a new humanity according to His own mind and perfect thought, and in His Son there is the arch-type of that new humanity to which God is going to conform a race—"conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom. viii. 29).

Every time you and I who are the Lord's people gather to the Lord's Table and take of the loaf, we are testifying to this great fact, that we are now all of a piece with Him as a new kind of humanity; for that loaf is Christ given for us to be our life. But to be the life of that which is to answer to God in His perfect holiness, that life must be free from everything that is corrupt, everything that is subject to corruption; it must have no element of corruption in it. And that is Christ. His humanity is incorrupt

and incorruptible, and that is given, and in thus receiving Him, just as food becomes ourselves, He becomes the very basis of this new inner life, this new creation, which is within us. He is its very life and support, sustenance and energy. He becomes to us the basis of an altogether other and new life and being.

The great reality about a true Christian is that he or she is progressively being changed into another, is becoming different. It is not just and only an objective matter of faith in Christ as outward. It is more than that; it is living by Christ inwardly.

So God has come into this realm of humanity in the Person of His Son as representing a new order altogether, a new order of mankind, and, by vital union with Christ, a new race is springing up, a new order. A new kind of humanity is secretly growing, and proceeding unto that day of which the Apostle speaks, when there will be the manifestation of the sons of God; and then the curse will be lifted, and the creation itself will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.

Now the point is the tremendous significance of the Incarnation, of the Word becoming flesh and tabernacling among us, the tremendous significance of Christ as Son of Man, as setting up amongst men a new kind of being, a new type and form of humanity. There is no hope for the creation save in that new type, that new order. If men saw this, would it not solve all the problems of this time? What are they talking about? What is the great phrase most common on men's lips to-day? Is it not a new order, a new world order? But they are blind, they talk in the dark; they are groping for something, but they see not. The only new order is the order of the Son of Man. The only hope for this world is that there shall come about this new creation in Christ Jesus.

The Truth Foreshadowed in Israel's History

We could dwell long upon the humanity of the Lord Jesus. There is a very great deal more in the Scripture about it than perhaps you realise. But do notice that God has laid this deep in the very foundations of history. You take Israel as God's great object

lesson for past ages—and their history of the past still stands as the great book of illustrations of God's principles—and you find that the very national life of Israel of old was founded upon those things which set forth the perfect humanity of the Lord Jesus.

You go to the book of Leviticus, and you take up those feasts: you see what a place the humanity (the fine flour) has in those symbols and types. You see that God has said there in illustration that the life of a people which is to satisfy Him is based upon a nature, a humanity: not the old broken-down humanity of Adam, but another. Right into the very foundation of the life of such a people, there is laid this reality: there is a humanity that is perfect and incorruptible: and out from those feasts must be extricated every suggestion and suspicion of leaven, which speaks of corruption, the ferment of the old nature. It has no place when it is a matter of the very basis of Israel's life God-ward.

Well, you see, there is much about it, but we are not going to explore the whole ground. I simply want to point out the fact that the humanity of the Lord Jesus as Son of Man sets forth some new kind, some new type, some new order, in God's universe which does satisfy God.

Herein lies the tremendous and wonderful meaning of union with Christ through faith, bringing us right into what He is in His acceptability to God. The practical outworking of that must be that you and I more and more forsake the ground of the old Adam, of nature, our ground, and abide in Christ. That just means holding on by faith to what He is and letting go what we are, and so the pleasure of God is found there. If we get on to our own ground, what we are by nature, and take account of that and try to make something good of that, or even spend our time deploring what a miserable thing that nature is, we lose all the glory of God. The glory of God is in another humanity. Dwell on Christ, be occupied with Christ, let your faith hold firmly to Christ, abide in Christ, and the glory is there. It is the glory of Christ as the Son of Man. What are the most blessed and glorious hours in the Christian's experience? Are they not the hours in which they are contemplating and taken up with what Christ is?

(To be continued)

T.A.S.

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The Cross, The Church and the Conflict *R*

No. 2

The Church According to God's Thought

Our hearts have been directed anew to the relationship between the Cross, the Church, and the spiritual conflict, and what we are seeing in the first place is that, in the purpose of God, the Cross is intended to lead directly and immediately to the Church. You will just suffer a word or two of re-emphasis in that particular matter before we go further.

The Expression in the Church of the Life of the Lord Jesus

It is possible to have an evangelism of the Cross which does not lead directly and definitely to the Church, and it is possible to have a teaching about the Cross in its fuller meanings; that is, the Cross beyond the elementary matters of new birth, justification and such matters; it is possible, I say, to have a message, a teaching, which is fuller concerning the Cross than that, which, nevertheless, does not really and actually lead to the Church; in both of which cases the Divine intention is missed, the purpose of God is not reached. Now, probably someone might say, But surely everyone who is born again is in the Church, and the Church comes into being in that way: what is the Church but the company of those who are born again? Yes, but that is not what I am talking about. That may be true, and yet, for all practical purposes, the Church may not exist; for all practical purposes, in the real, present, practical values of the Church, the Body of Christ, it might not be in existence. I am speaking now not so much about the Church as it is called mystical; that is, that somewhere outside of this realm, in the unseen and the unknown, all believers are one, spiritual oneness obtains, and that is the Church. That may be true, I do not dispute that, but there is something more than that. If that were all, then perhaps we should be excused for all the things which exist here on the earth, and

we could accept them without any question or heart-ache, and we could just go blithely on our way, saying, Oh yes, it is quite true that all the Lord's people are divided up into thousands of warring sections and parties, nevertheless we do not take any notice of that; they are all one in heaven, they share one common life! I am quite sure that some of us do not feel that is what the Lord would have us accept. No, I am not speaking about the Church "mystical", to use a word of which I am always a little afraid. I am speaking about the Church actual. The Lord Jesus died that there might be an expression here on the earth of what He is in heaven, to have a working expression of His life.

Surely the very term "Body of Christ" means something more than just the fact that the life of the Body is one life. It signifies that the members of the Body are one Body. You see what I mean. Take the physical body. You or I may be alive physically more or less, but as for the members of our physical body there may be something that has altogether upset their unity; a germ, an injury, and there is no co-ordination of the members; they do not work together in co-operation and harmony, there is no proper control. There may be an acting of certain members out of relation to the others; yes, all sorts of things like that, where we would not say for a moment that that is because there are two or three different kinds of life in that body. We should say the life that is there is only one life; that is, that that man or woman has not the life of a man and of a dog, and of a bird, and of a fish, all different kinds of life, and that it is this that explains the contradictions in their make-up; that one moment you come on the cat life, and another the fish life, (whatever those things represent!). No, it is one kind of life, human life, and so far as the life is concerned, it is a unity.

But the expression in the body is not the expression of one life; it is not showing itself in a co-ordinated activity.

And the Church, all who are born again, may be sharing the one life of the Lord Jesus, and yet in the Body that life may not be showing itself in a co-ordinated, properly ordered organism in expression: and do you think the Lord can be satisfied with just the life being there and the expression being full of contradictions? Surely not! So that there is something more than being born again and receiving the life of the Lord. That life is given for a purpose, and that purpose is to bring about this properly governed and ordered and regulated and co-ordinated organism, the Church, which is His Body. I am speaking about that, not the mere existence of the Church, not the one mystical life of the Church, but the Church as a functioning thing under the sovereign government of Christ as its Head. The Cross was intended to lead to that.

Now I repeat, it is possible to have an evangelism that does not result in that at all, and such an evangelism is falling short of the intention of the Cross. It is possible to have a teaching of the full meaning of the Cross which does not work out in the Church according to God's thought, and such a teaching is falling short. We have known such teaching, full teaching on the meaning of the Cross, but what has remained has just been everything that is here amongst men; every kind of division going on, every kind of distinction in Christian sections continuing, all the differences and the conflicting differences just persisting in the presence of a fuller message of Calvary. Then there is something wrong somewhere, for the Cross, when really known and really operative, will deal with all that which contradicts the real Divine thought about the Church. The Cross is intended to lead to the Church as God has conceived the Church.

Well now, we were saying this afternoon that the Cross has certain specific aspects or directions in which it deals with things that are in the way of God's thought concerning the Church. We shall go on now with some other things that the Cross effects. But let us recognise that the Cross provides the ground for

the Church and the Church is intended to show what the Cross means. When the Church does approximate to the Divine thought in reality, you will see there exactly what the Cross has meant and has accomplished. The Church will be the embodiment of Calvary. The Church is to preach the Cross by what it is first; and that is where you begin in the book of the Acts. You can see all that obtained in the pre-Calvary days, even with Christ amongst men, and Christ with a company round Him. You can see all the old elements of divisions, strifes, ambitions, avarice, pride, self-assertiveness, all these things are there in the Gospels, even amongst disciples, and the inner circle of disciples. But when the Cross is an accomplished fact, and the Holy Ghost brings it right into the life of that company, then you find a wonderful revelation of what that Cross has done; for they had all things common, not one said of the things which he possessed that they were his own, and so on. You have something done. All self-interest has gone, all that rivalry has disappeared. Now it is all for the other; it is love, it is joy, it is peace. The end of Acts ii. is a wonderful revelation of what the Cross has done in people. And that is how the Lord wishes it to be. And when you come to Corinthians, to conditions which are such a violent contradiction of the Church according to God's mind, the only thing to do is to know nothing save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. You have to get back to the Cross, in order to get the Church as it should be. So the Cross provides the ground and the means for the Church, and the Church becomes the embodiment of the meaning of the Cross. That is what obtains when God has things according to His mind.

Well then, if the Church is the Divine outcome of the Cross, it must define the nature and meaning of the Cross. What does the Cross do? What is the function of the Cross? We have viewed that in three directions in our previous meditation—God-ward, man-ward and Satan-ward. Now, let us see it in one or two other connections which touch all three of these at the same time.

(To be continued)

T.A.-S.

The Man God Approves

(continued)

Readiness to be Poured Out

Paul further says, "Neither at any time were we found using . . . a cloak of covetousness, God is witness". No covetousness, self-seeking, getting for himself. How in keeping with our blessed Lord this is, Who, as the Man approved of God, said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts xx. 35). And again, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. xx. 28). And here is Paul in this very portion saying, "We were gentle in the

midst of you, as when a nurse cherisheth her own children: even so, being affectionately desirous of you, we were well pleased to impart unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls". Here is the man God can approve, and to whom He can entrust a ministry, the man who has been brought to the place, under the hand of God, where he is willing to be poured out, giving his own life on behalf of those to whom the Lord sends him. This is not a thing that just happens when a man is called to be a missionary or a preacher. God has been working in

the background of a man's life to produce this feature of character, and when this has become the direction of a man's heart-attitude generally, God says, Here is a man approved; I can entrust him with the Gospel. It is a question of character. We call it the Cross, that heart-attitude which seeks not its own, but rejoices rather to be poured out than to get.

Our re-action to God's call may be that it is going to be costly. One of the very features of fitness for a Divine call is that the heart recognises that sacrifice will be required along that line. The fact that it is going to cost is not an indication that it is not of God: quite the contrary. You remember the word this morning about myrrh, the fruit of suffering. Here is a man in whom is found that readiness to suffer that others may live. Paul writes to the Corinthians among whom he had lived in words such as these: "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved" (II Cor. xii. 15). "Love seeketh not its own" (I Cor. xiii. 5). Love counts it a privilege that love's suffering should issue in blessing to others. It is a mark of an approved man.

Meekness and Lowliness

Then a third thing Paul says is this: "nor seeking glory of men". He goes on to say that he did not claim his privilege as an apostle, to be maintained by them. "Ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: working night and day, that we might not burden any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God". In other words, Paul says, We did not stand on our dignity with you, we did not seek glory from you, we were ready for the lowly service, to take our coats off and work hard. We did not take the attitude of, Oh, I could not come down to that level, I am an apostle! This is a mentality that we need to know. The final ingredient in the sweet incense was that of humility and lowliness of mind. This is the mind of one to whom God can entrust a ministry, one who does not, because of his calling, stand on his dignity, and say, I could not demean myself to do that, I am called to something better than that! Whenever we find ourselves—and we do—tending to think like that, let us flee it. That is the mark of the proud one who set himself up to be equal with God. It is the mark of the serpent in our fallen nature. It is the cursed thing that ruined the world. But that which redeemed the world was the spirit of Him Who said, "I am meek and lowly in heart; come, learn of me" (Matt. xi. 28-30).

In this connection, we have some very striking words of our Lord in John v, where He is chiding with those Jews who would not submit to having their need met at His hands. "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life". "I receive not honour from men". "You will not come to me"—"I receive not glory". You see the connection. If I were some great One, with pomp and dignity and show, you would be glad enough to come, you would get reflected glory; but I am a nobody, I am despised; you will not come to Me that you might have life;

you love the glory of men more than the praise of God! Do you see the thought? This One Who said, "I am meek and lowly in heart", is the One Who was in His servant, Paul, who in turn could say, You know when I came among you, I was not standing on my dignity, though I might have done; I did not claim my rights, I took the place of a nobody among you.

These then are the features of the man that God approves. He is one who has learned in the ordinary course of life to walk before God, and not before men. He stands for absolute truth and righteousness manward.

Then, inwardly he is one who is without covetousness. That is a heart attitude, a secret thing. Both before men and God, righteousness, truth, absolute sincerity, governs his manner of life.

Further, there is the thought that such ministry is the fruit of suffering. He is a man ready to give his own soul if that will help. Then there is also the humility of mind. The man approved of God is not one to stand on any dignity. He is willing to do the lowliest, humblest thing.

Now, if the Lord is to find us trustworthy for any kind of ministry, I am sure He is going to look for at least these three things: firstly, our passion to live according to the truth, inwardly before God and outwardly before men, to have nothing in our lives allowed that is not sincere, without offence; secondly, as to whether we are ready to be poured out, or whether we want to gain our own lives; and finally, whether we are people who stand on our dignity, who claim our rights, or whether we are such as are ready to be made the off-scouring of all things. This is what makes a man ready for a trust from God.

All this that issues in a ministry, all this which makes a man approved, implies a life lived all the time under the government of the Spirit of Him Who was the meek and lowly One, Who poured out His soul unto death, Who sought not His own; and Who ever spoke the whole truth to men, and could say of Himself, "I am the truth". The Spirit brings us all these features of Christ, stamps them on us, works them into our character, makes them to be the hall-mark of our lives, in the measure in which we yield positively to His government. Let us seek, then, to live under the ever-present government of the Spirit of Christ. May that be our reaching out of heart. O Spirit of Christ, Who hast all these features of the blessed Master, work in me in terms of them! To what end: with my eye on a ministry? No; that in all things I may please God. And when I am well pleasing to Him, He may say, This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased; and a commitment of a ministry to such a one will be the outcome. And if, for the present, the time for you is one of trial, difficulty, discipline, waiting, and perplexity, take courage; for by these very things the Lord would work in you, to make you a man approved, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed.

The Lord make us all His servants. G.P.

The Mystery of the Gospel

READING : Eph. vi. 18-20 ; Rom. xvi. 25-27.

Immense harm has been done to the cause of Christ in the earth by the failure of many to realise the majesty of the Gospel ; and further by its severance from that vast realm of truth suggested by the use of the words " The Mystery ". What God has joined together no servant of His should put asunder. That the Gospel (or Glad Tidings) of God, concerning His Son (Rom. i. 1-3) is closely linked with " The Mystery, kept in silence through times eternal ", the above passages of the Word clearly state. It is impossible to estimate the spiritual mischief which has been wrought by the separation into practically water-tight compartments of " Evangelistic activity " on the one hand, and " Church Truth " on the other. One of the unfortunate results has been that some of the Lord's true people have been found giving all their attention to exploring the Scriptures in relation to the Church, its origin, nature, and destiny, together with its expression in local Assemblies, while neglecting to cultivate that evangelistic passion which should characterise all who love the Christ of Calvary and the God Who " so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son ". In the other direction many have concentrated on the elementary truths of the Gospel, given themselves exclusively to the work of winning souls, making that an end in itself, instead of recognising that it is the God appointed means for the gathering out from the nations of a " People for His Name " : with the result that the Gospel of God, divorced from its predestined purpose, has largely lost that element of Divine wonder which should always accompany its proclamation. Too often it has become, in the thought of the preacher, simply a way of bringing blessing to man, instead of securing the glory of God in fulfilling Divine purpose, which includes as an essential, but subordinate, part, the bringing into untold blessing of all who receive the message.

The Gospel is described in the New Testament in very exalted terms. As noted above, in Romans i. Paul majestically describes it as " The gospel of God . . . concerning his Son . . . Jesus Christ our Lord ". In II Cor. iv. it is called " The gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God ". In I Tim. i. 11, the title given is, " The gospel of the glory of the blessed God ". In these titles the Divine side of the Gospel is stressed, and it is evident that the blessing it brings to man, while a necessary and most happy consequence, is not the chief element. God is glorified in the securing of His mighty purposes, and man is supremely blest by being brought into line with them. We much need to recover that outlook and emphasis.

The Scope of the Gospel

That the Gospel is something far more splendid in its content and range than is generally understood is evident by the terms in which Paul speaks of its proclamation, as well as by the titles he gives to it.

In Romans xv. 16, he employs most unusual language, and presents ideas not at all commonly associated with Gospel preaching. If the passage be carefully studied it will be observed that Paul thinks of himself as a sacrificing priest whose great mission it is to secure an oblation from amongst the nations which can be offered up to God upon the altar, and accepted as being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. The R.V. margin renders the word " ministering " as " ministering in sacrifice ". Dr. Handley Moule renders it " doing priest-work " with the Gospel of God. It is evident that Paul has the whole process of salvation covered by Chapters 4 to 8 of the epistle in mind. The condemned sinner, first justified by blood, then sanctified by the Holy Spirit, learning to live in the Spirit, and to sing the overcomers song, offering his body upon the altar " a living sacrifice " (xii. 1). God is the great object throughout, His glory the supreme end to be served. Man loses nothing by getting the proper perspective, but, on the contrary, gains immensely, because he comes immediately into the onward march of the Divine movement as the Eternal God works out the purpose of His heart, formed before the world began.

Paul himself is perhaps the greatest proof and example of the intimate and vital connection between the preaching of Christ as Lord and Saviour, and the full purpose of God which is described as " The Mystery ". Was there ever so ardent a gospeller as the Apostle ? His journeyings were prodigious, his zeal unflagging, his courage unflinching. As he himself describes it in a matchless passage : " In labours more abundantly, in prisons more abundantly, in stripes above measure, in deaths oft . . . in labour and travail, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness ". And none of these things moved him, or turned him aside. Faithfully, and over a long period of years, he heralded the Gospel, winning souls and founding Churches wherever he was led. It was to this man, who was able to call God to witness to his faithful zeal as he " served with the worship of his spirit in the gospel of his Son " (Rom. i. 9), that God gave the revelation of " The Mystery ". It was an astounding unveiling of Divine Purpose, and must have filled Paul's soul with amazed wonder and worship, occupying his thoughts, and compelling him to pray in quite new directions. Did it lessen his zeal for the proclamation of the Gospel ? Not one whit. Writing at the end of his life from his Roman prison to his son Timothy, in what is believed to be the last letter he ever penned, he exhorts, " Be not ashamed therefore of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner : but SUFFER HARDSHIP WITH THE GOSPEL according to the power of God ; who saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal, but now hath been manifested by the appearing of our Saviour

Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and incorruption to light through the gospel". His zeal is unabated, but he has now come to see as never before the full scope and purpose of the message of redeeming love. It is related to, and prepares the way for, the Heavenly Calling. It is concerned with God's Eternal Purpose. It is all one great, matchless incorruptible, Divine Secret, now made known, and he was appointed in relation to the whole vast scheme "a herald, an apostle, a teacher", and also a great sufferer.

The Right Approach to the Gospel

In proclaiming the Gospel it makes a world of difference whether we have God as the object before our hearts, or the need of men as the supreme thought. This will vitally affect the level of the preaching and have a determining influence on its results. Paul's preaching was wonderfully fruitful. His attitude is beautifully set forth in I Thess. ii. 4. "Even as we have been approved of God to be **INTRUSTED** (put in trust, A.V.) with the gospel, so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God which proveth our hearts". If God is pleased with the preaching, if it satisfies Him, it will win men. Even if men reject the message the ministry is not unfruitful, for again this typical evangelist declares: "We are a sweet savour of Christ unto God, in them that are being saved, and in them that are perishing; to the one a savour from death unto death; to the other a savour from life unto life. **AND WHO IS SUFFICIENT FOR THESE THINGS**" (II Cor. ii. 15-16). The man who preaches with the realisation that the Gospel is a sacred trust from God is not likely to suffer from the blighting effect of self-complacency or self-sufficiency. His prayer will always be that he may be hidden behind the Cross, that Christ alone may be exalted, and that he may realise his complete dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

Such evangelists will have a great conception of the glory of the Person of Christ. "WHOM we proclaim" exults Paul. There is a great content in that WHOM. It includes all that has been unveiled in the earlier verses of the first chapter of the letter to the Colossians. The Saviour he proclaims is He through Whom and for Whom the universe was created: Who is before all things, and in Whom all things consist (hold together). He is the image of the invisible God, and in all things He is to have the pre-eminence. Or as the Apostle John puts it in a rich and pregnant phrase, He is "THE WORD made flesh". No one can proclaim such a Person without awe and worship filling the heart, especially in view of the Cross of Calvary. The Cross is seen to be an eternal fact of immense significance because it is His Cross. He met God's need, He satisfied God's heart, all the requirements of Divine righteousness were met in Him: so He can bring salvation in its fulness to the utmost bound of human need. The preacher whose privilege it is to present such a Saviour to men must have a glowing heart as he preaches the "Gospel of the Glory of Christ". **WHOM WE PROCLAIM!!**

Paul and "The Gospel"

One of the chief characteristics of Paul's letters is his use of the superlative. Sometimes he piles words on words, and seems to exhaust language in an endeavour to express the truth he is seeking to convey. At another time he will employ quite unusual words, not familiar to his readers, to arrest their attention. His language glows as with living flame. It is obvious he is seeing far more than he is able to express. He has a revelation of spiritual realities quite beyond the range of human speech or writing. His heart is full to bursting point, and his words flow like a mountain torrent. The reason of it all is to be found in the fact that some of the infinite thoughts, purposes, and plans of the Eternal God have been unveiled to him, and they are too vast and wonderful to be passed on to others in finite terms. His commission is to make known the unknowable, to express the inexpressible, "to make all men see what is the stewardship of the mystery which from all ages hath been hid in God" (Eph. iii. 9).

So he says in words which indicate the wonder that is filling his soul, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph. iii. 8). The more carefully this statement is examined the more remarkable it is seen to be. Here are riches of Christ to be communicated. Paul's task as an evangelist is to preach these riches to the nations. The Gentiles are to have an Evangel presented to them which shall bring them into an experimental knowledge of these riches of grace and glory. And Paul uses a word which at once makes the whole declaration paradoxical. He says that the riches are "UNSEARCHABLE". They cannot be discovered. To use language employed in another passage where this identical word occurs, they are "past finding out". A preacher cannot tell what he does not himself know, or communicate to others that which transcends his own power to grasp. Yet this is exactly what Paul says he is Divinely commissioned to do. He has to proclaim to men a Gospel which will bring to them riches which are beyond all human power to measure, to assay or to value; riches inherent in Christ, which can only be known as they are revealed to each individual soul by the Spirit Whose delight it is to unfold the glories of Christ.

The original word here translated "unsearchable" only occurs twice in the New Testament (Eph. iii. 8, and Rom. xi. 33). There is a similar word also rendered unsearchable in Rom. xi. 33, which only occurs in that verse. But in the Old Testament there is a word which is used three times in the book of Job which in the Septuagint Version is rendered by this very word "unsearchable" as employed by Paul in Eph. iii. 8. Now each of the passages in both Old and New Testaments has as its theme some wonder of God, either in His works or ways, (See Job v. 9; ix. 10; xxxiv. 24), something on which man can meditate, but which altogether trans-

cends his powers of understanding. The more he considers, the more he will be filled with awe and worship. So it is with the Gospel. It can be received by the simplest soul, but its range and glory transcend the biggest intellectual grasp or the profoundest mind. The riches of Christ are untrackable, past finding out. They have to do with the Mystery of God, with His Eternal Purpose. And again let it be stressed that the Gospel and the Mystery are not things apart, but intimately related in one vast, glorious conception.

Herein lies the explanation of the Apostle's vehemence in his condemnation of those who pervert the Gospel of Christ. His language is an enigma to those who fail to see the true nature of the Glad Tidings. It is thought that he was extravagant, and unduly severe. His words are indeed strong: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema" (accursed—Gal. i. 8). But they are deliberately strong, and in order to leave no room for misunderstanding he repeats them in verse 9. How many preachers to-day are under this curse? Oh! terrible will be the shock of discovery, too late, that Paul was speaking by the Holy Spirit, and that the word of condemnation is indeed the Word of the Living God. The Gospel that Paul preached was not something he had been taught in a theological College. He knew something of the Schools, being a disciple of Gamaliel, at whose feet he had sat for years. The result of that training was that, with all the zeal of his nature, he violently opposed those who were proclaiming the Gospel of Christ, persecuting and imprisoning all upon whom he could lay his hands. But when he saw the glory of Christ upon the Damascus road, everything was changed. He had to unlearn a great deal that he had been taught and receive the truth by Divine revelation. So he says, "For I make known to you, brethren, as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that it was not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ" . . . "It was the good pleasure of God . . . to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles" (Gal. i. 11-12, 15-16). None are really competent to fulfil a ministry of evangelism unless the Gospel has come to them by revelation of Jesus Christ. None who have been thus equipped of God will doubt that the Gospel is a far bigger thing than a plan for meeting the need of sinful men. It does that wondrously: it reveals One able to save to the uttermost. But the Gospel leads immediately to the Church. It is the means appointed by God for the gathering out from the nations of that people whose description is "The Church, which is his Body, the fulness of him who

fillet all in all" (Eph. i. 22-23). What a statement! Those saved by the grace of God, as they, by faith, receive Him Whom the Gospel presents, "baptised in one Spirit into one body", become His fulness. Whose riches of grace and glory are unsearchable. This is the Hope of the Gospel (Col. i. 23), the glorious goal to which it leads. Oh for anointed eyes that we may see "The riches of the glory of this mystery" (Col. i. 27), "hid from all ages and generations, but now . . . manifested to his saints" (verse 26). Well might the Apostle write, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out" (Rom. xi. 33).

An Exhortation

Let us be deeply humbled as we meditate upon these sublime truths. The Lord, in His mercy, forgive us if we have made a division where He reveals a unity. Let us be willing to sacrifice our own thoughts and think God's thoughts after Him. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are . . . my thoughts than your thoughts (Isaiah lv. 9). And if we have, for any reason, or by any means, lost our evangelistic passion, let us remember that the Gospel of our salvation is also the "Gospel of the Glory of the Blessed God" and apart from its proclamation, in the power of the Holy Spirit, the Church can never be completed, or become God's elect instrument for the bringing in of the Kingdom; nor can the Lord Jesus enter upon "the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints" (Eph. i. 18).

In our day and generation let us also fulfil the apostolic injunction to pray that utterance may be given to all God-appointed evangelists "to make known with all boldness the Mystery of the Gospel" in order that their ministry, in conjunction with that of pastors and teachers, may be for the building up of "The Body of Christ", and so find its true place in that supreme work which God is doing in the earth in the present Dispensation of Grace.

May we have anointed eyes to see the profound significance of the fact that the Epistle to the Romans, which is the fullest and most comprehensive unfolding of the Gospel to be found in Holy Writ, closes with this magnificent doxology: "Now to him that is able to stablish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal, but now is manifested, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, is made known to all the nations unto obedience of faith; to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory for ever. Amen. (Romans xvi. 25-27).

S. A.

The Discipline of the Cross

"Everything that may abide the fire, ye shall make to go through the fire, and it shall be clean . . . and all that abideth not the fire ye shall make to go through the water" (Num. xxxi. 23).

"He measured . . . and brought me through . . ." (Ezek. xlvi. 4).

From the Wilderness

No. 2

The Purpose of The Wilderness

READING : Deut. i. 2-3 ; viii. 2.

In our previous meditation, we were almost entirely on the negative side of this matter, namely, the distance which is the difference between ourselves and Christ. Forty years were taken when eleven days alone were necessary from the Divine standpoint, because of the great expanse which lies between what we are, even as the Lord's people, in ourselves, and what the Lord is. This expanse of wilderness was bounded, as we know, at both ends by death ; by the Red Sea and by the Jordan respectively. It was a space locked up in death, and, from one standpoint, it is that place in the life of the Lord's people where death has to be applied and made to operate.

Now we rather desire to strike a more positive note and aspect of the matter. It is true that one of the great lessons in the life of the Lord's people is that of the other-ness, the complete other-ness of Christ from what they are ; a lesson to be learned in every respect, and along the line of undoing so largely, our undoing. But what is the Lord after ? What is the positive outcome of it all in the Lord's mind and will ? What issued from the forty years, or what issued from this company of the Lord's people ? At the end of the forty years of this wilderness journey, what have we really in hand, so far as this particular company and journey were concerned ? We have only two men in hand at the end, Joshua and Caleb. We know that another generation went in, but that is another thing. So far as this particular generation is concerned, all that we have at the end is two men ; but what two men ! Those two men, one of them perhaps in particular, represented and embodied all that there was to be. The future hung upon them. The Lord's interests for His people were bound up with them. And they were the fruit of this school of the wilderness.

The Lord's Need of Men and Women of Stature

But let us come to it immediately, without any further delay or going round. What is the Lord after ? This came to me with very real force recently in a time of indisposition, and when it seemed that everything on the outside was being narrowed down and the prospects for anything very much of the Lord seemed to be so limited. I was driven very much on the Lord about the whole situation, to inquire very earnestly what it all meant and what it was the Lord was really after, and I can say to you that it came to me, in the way that things do just now and again in a lifetime, as the Lord's own message to the heart ; and it amounted to this : "What I am after at this time is men and women of spiritual stature ; I am going to need them". That is how it came to me with great strength. When it so happens, it is as though something has been written inside,

and you know when you get something like that from the Lord it is life, it is salvation, it is release. And so it was ; there was a new sense of meaning, real meaning, in things. Men and women of spiritual stature—I am going to need them !

The whole of this work in the wilderness for forty years was found in two men. You say, that is a poor issue. Not when you recognise the value of those men and how many there were afterward who owed everything to the spiritual stature of those men.

You pass on in the Word and you find that fact coming up again and again. You go to I Chron. xxi, and you know what you have there. David is in the wilderness. All that in a public way is of the Lord is in the hands of a man who had been chosen—representation. Saul holds the public position, but he is man-chosen, and he embodies everything that is man, man in the things of God. But God's anointed one is there outside for the time being, and he is in the wilderness. In that chapter you have three secessions to David. There is the secession to Ziklag, the secession to the stronghold or cave, and the secession to Hebron, and if you look you will find that those who seceded to David in each and every case are described as men who were able to wield the sword and the spear, men who were able to keep rank and to lead. They of that sort came finally to David at Hebron to turn again the kingdom and make David king over all Israel, and these are they who were needed when the kingdom was turned. When David came to the throne, he needed men of stature for the constituting of the kingdom, for its carrying on. The men of stature had been found in the wilderness. They had come to him, not when all was going well, when there was any appeal to the flesh, when coming to him would have meant popularity, influence in the world. No, everything was to the contrary. They had to leave that realm and come out to the place where everything was in disrepute, in rejection, under ostracism ; to be the enemy of what was public religion, the established and acknowledged and recognised thing ; to come out and be tested there with David in the wilderness, men of stature whom he was going to need in a coming day.

We need not follow the principle through. You know that it comes up so frequently. The Lord finds a little company, speaking generally, amongst His people and brings them into the difficult school of a spiritual wilderness, to increase their spiritual measure in the light of a need which is coming. We, I think, are not mistaken and wrong in saying that the Lord is not giving a great deal of encouragement in these days to great public movements and efforts and activities in Christianity. That is not His line at the moment. Many who are honestly burdened with the need are straining after something like that, a

great movement amongst Christians and in the world, but the Lord has not yet set His seal to anything like that in any very real way. He is not doing it just now.

But I think we are just as right in saying that the Lord is very intensely occupied in an inner, hidden, secret way with many of His children along the line of deep discipline and trial. I do not think there is any doubt about that. This is a time in which the work of God is very much hidden, and is of a very intense kind, with a company within the main company of Christian people. Not all Christian people are going the same way, but there are those who are. To secure man and women of spiritual stature in the light of a need which is coming—that seems to me to be the explanation.

We do not know what that need is. It is useless to try to forecast, to shape, the future. All sorts of

things are possible and probable. It is not difficult to imagine—though I think it goes beyond imagination, mere imagination—that the horrors of peace will be greater than the horrors of war. You say, that is strong speaking. I have used a strong word—horror—but I do not think it is too strong, I do not think it is the wrong word. Perhaps the difficulties and sufferings and trials of peace will be very much greater than those of war. We do not know. I say it is useless to try to forecast the future, but there are such prospects, and if that is so, a very great need is going to exist spiritually. Things are not going to be easy for a long time; they are going to be difficult, hard, tight, perhaps severe. A need is going to arise, and that need is only going to be met by people who know the Lord in a peculiar way, who have proved and come to know the Lord in a wilderness, a spiritual wilderness.

T.A.S.

Spiritual Sight

No. 7 (continued)

Seeing the Glory of Christ as Son of Man

The Redeemer-Kinsman

Then the glory of Christ as Son of Man is to be seen in Him as the Redeemer-Kinsman. Firstly, as the arch-type of a new humanity; then, secondly, as the Redeemer-Kinsman. Your thoughts will at once go to that little classic, the book of Ruth. I need not tell you the story of Ruth in detail, but it is from there that we draw the great truths and principles of the redeeming activity of the Lord.

The story in brief is this. The inheritance has been lost. The day comes when that inheritance becomes a matter of solemn, sad, but earnest concern to the hearts of those who have lost it. Now the realisation that the inheritance has passed out of their control and right has come home to them, and they are deeply exercised in heart about the lost inheritance. There is only one way, according to the law of things, in which that lost inheritance can be re-purchased, and that is that there should be a kinsman—he must be a kinsman, he must be of their own kin—who has the right to redeem, and who has the ability to redeem, and who is willing to redeem. Those who lost the inheritance, and have now become so deeply concerned about its recovery, are looking for that redeemer-kinsman who has the right, who has the ability, the resource, and who has the willingness to redeem the lost inheritance. You know how Ruth comes into touch with Boaz, and thinking him to be the redeemer-kinsman, recognising that if he has the will, he has the resource, she discovers that he has not the right, because there is another who comes first. An appeal has to be made to the one who has the right, and it is found that, while he has the right,

he has neither ability nor resource; and he passes over his right to Boaz. Thus at length the one wholly fitted for the business is found in Boaz. He has now the right, he has the resource and the ability, and he has the will to do it.

But then there is one other thing in the story. According to the law of things, the redeemer-kinsman has to take to wife the one for whom he redeems the inheritance, and the way has got to be cleared for that. The other kinsman could not do it because the way was not clear for that, but Boaz has a clear way to do it.

There are the elements of the story. I am not going to take up every little detail, but just the broad outline. You see how God has placed there such an exquisite illustration of the glory of Christ as the Redeemer-Kinsman. The inheritance has been lost. "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet" (Heb. ii. 6-8). But where is that man? Well, that inheritance has been lost and all that God intended for man has been forfeited. Man now, through Adam's sin, has lost the inheritance. In Adam, no longer is he heir of all things, the inheritance is gone. The tragedy of this humanity in Adam is just that: once an heir, made to inherit, but now bankrupt, hopeless, having lost all. That is the tragedy of this humanity. That is where we are by nature. We have it written in our beings. Our very nature witnesses to the fact

that there is something lacking, something missing, something that ought to be and is not. We are groping for it. It is in the very nature of things to crave, to long for that. Every ambition of man, every quest, every passion of man, is man shouting out of his nature that there is something he ought to have but cannot get. He accumulates all that this world can give him, and dies, saying, No, I have not got it, I have not found what I am after! He is an heir with a lost inheritance.

The Right to Redeem

And into a world like that, into a race like that, God, in His Son, in terms of manhood, comes from the outside as the Redeemer-Kinsman. He has, first of all, the right to redeem. Why? Because He is the firstborn of all creation. He has the first place. This is no second-place kinsman. "He is before all things" (Col. i. 17). He is the firstborn; He has the right because of place, the place He occupies, the first place. Oh, think again of all that there is about the Lord Jesus as coming first, as being in the first place, as being the firstborn, and you will see that constitutes His right, for in the very nature of things in the Bible, it is the firstborn, who carries the rights with him always. Here is Jesus, Son of Man, the first by appointment and placing of God. He has the right to redeem.

The Power to Redeem

He has also the power to redeem, that is, He has the resources for redeeming. Well, let us ask what is wanted. What is, in the nature of things, required for redeeming? The inheritance has to be redeemed not only for us but unto God. We in turn are God's inheritance, we are God's possession by right, and not only have we lost our inheritance, but God has lost His inheritance in us, and what we might be satisfied with as a return, God can never be satisfied with. If God is to get back in us that inheritance which He Himself has lost through man's sin and wilfulness, its redemption must be according to God, something that satisfies God: and God cannot be satisfied with just anything. It must be something that wholly answers to God's own nature. So let us say at once that "we were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from our vain manner of life . . . but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish" (I Pet. i. 18-19). What is it that satisfies God? It is an incorruptible something. That which can alone bring back to God His satisfaction must be incorruptible, undefiled, without spot or blemish. These are words which always relate to Christ in type, we know: a lamb, without spot, without blemish. That is the redemption resource, the redemption power. Redemption means to recover the lost inheritance, and He has redeemed by His Blood, because that Blood represents His life which is an incorruptible life, a sinless life, a life which wholly satisfies an utterly righteous and holy God. That is the price of redemption. Can He do it?

Oh, to see the humanity of the Lord Jesus incorruptibility, is to see the mighty power to re-Set aside the Lord Jesus and you set aside the power of redemption, the whole right of redemption there is no hope of redemption. We can never be redeemed unto God with such corruptible things as silver and gold. To be redeemed unto God is to have that a life must be forthcoming which is according to God's own nature. Have you got that, have you got it? If we can find that in ourselves, then we can have our own redemption, our own redeemer: and will say it?

Oh, this is where all the blindness is. We speak of our previous meditation of the terrible blindness which is seen in evolution. But here is the blindness of that terrible gospel, which is not a gospel at all, which is being preached, namely, humanism, that it is in man's own power to become like God. The roots and seeds of perfection are deep down in man's own being if only he will dig deep enough; there is no need for intervention from outside at all; it is not necessary for God to intervene for Christ to come into this world. It is in man's own power to rise, he can improve himself. He is a wonderful creature deep down in his being. What blindness! You say, Amazing thing in the light of present happenings and present world conditions; amazing thing that any man can believe it, let alone preach it; amazing thing that with one breath they talk about the awful atrocities which are worse than those of the dark ages, and with the next breath they say it is in man to be godlike! Blindness! With all this we may say about the courage of men; the courage of our men in the Services, for example, all their readiness to suffer hardship, and much more—and we do not detract from that one whit—real point is this: are men more noble moment by moment?

I was speaking a little while ago to a man who held a very responsible position amongst seafaring men in the Marine Service, and he said, I have been in the Marine Service all my life, and I thought I knew a lot of bad things could be, but things as I find them today in the Services almost shock me! The state of life morally in those Services appals me. There is a hardened man of a lifelong seafaring career saying that. Are men morally rising? No, who can say Yes! in the light of what we know today.

And yet they are preaching this gospel of humanism, that man is steadily rising and Utopia is on the horizon; because man has it in himself to rise. That is blindness, terrible blindness. But oh! to see that God's Son, the Son of Man, is to see the hope, the direction in which redemption lies; because redemption lies in the direction of another kind of humanism, and in a power to redeem, because there is something there which satisfies God, and anything which does not satisfy God up to the hilt can never be a redemption power. Has the Lord Jesus the power? We all cry with one voice, Yes, He has the power, He has the resource for doing this.

(concluded on front page)

*(continued from back page)***The Liberty to Redeem**

But another question arises. Is He free to redeem? One thing is taken for granted in this matter of the redeeming kinsman, and that is that he can only have one wife. If he is already married he is disqualified, because he cannot marry the person for whom he redeems the inheritance. That was the trouble with the other kinsman, in the case of Ruth. He was not free; he was married and had a family. But Boaz was unmarried, was free, and he could take Ruth to wife; the way was perfectly clear.

Now we come into the realm of sublime things spiritually. Christ loved the church and gave himself for it, that he might redeem it from all iniquity (Eph. v. 25, Titus ii. 14). "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it". The redeemed is to be joined to the Lord, and the Lord Jesus—may I say it reverently?—is only going to have one wife. There is only going to be one marriage supper of the Lamb. The Church is His only Bride. His redeemed are the only ones to be brought into such a relationship with Himself; and the way is clear. He is not committed at all, He stands perfectly free to redeem, and to take the consequences of redeeming, even

of marrying the one for whom the inheritance is redeemed.

Does not redemption bring us into a very sacred position with the Lord Jesus? That is the true significance of the title that attaches to Him as our Redeemer-Kinsman, that we should be joined to Him. Not redeemed as a chattel, not redeemed as a thing, but redeemed to be joined to Him forever in the holiest of all bonds. Married to the Lord. That is the meaning of the Son of Man. Yes, He is free, He can do it.

The Willingness to Redeem

Only one question remains. Is He willing? He has the right, He has the resource, He has the liberty. Will He? Oh, how Ruth and Naomi must have waited with bated breath and thumping hearts while that final question was being met and answered! Will he? Ah, but there may be no thumping heart here this afternoon, no bated breath. Will He? Is He willing? Well, what do we say to that? He has done it, and that answers the question. All that remains, if we are not in the enjoyment of it, is for us to accept-it, believe it. He is willing!

May the Lord just ravish our hearts and enlarge our seeing of Jesus, the Son of Man. T.A.S.

NEXT SPECIAL GATHERINGS AT HONOR OAK

(If the Lord wills)

April 7-10 (Easter)

Friday, 11 a.m., 3.30 and 6.30 p.m.

Saturday, 3.30 and 6.30 p.m.

Lord's Day, 11 a.m., 3.30 and 6.30 p.m.

Monday, 11 a.m., 3.30 and 6.30 p.m.

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MAY—JUNE, 1944

NO. 3, VOL. 22

The Representation of the Invisible God

No. 2

Representation on the Basis of Identification

READING: Gen. i. 26; Col. i. 15; II Cor. iv. 4; Rom. viii. 29; Col. iii. 10-11; Eph. iv. 13, 15-16; v. 22-32; John xx. 21-23; Matt. xxviii. 18-20; Acts i. 8.

The Identification of the Son with the Father

I think we might take our meditation up at the point where it most immediately relates to the Lord Jesus. At the close of our previous meditation, we were especially emphasizing the principle that representation is upon the basis of identification. The Lord Jesus was very particular and very emphatic when He was here in the matter of His relatedness to the Father. He kept that always in view. Of course, every consequence arose out of that. We will not deal with the consequence for the moment, we remind ourselves of the fact. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John xiv. 9). "I and my Father are one" (John x. 30). "Show us the Father...Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me?" (John xiv. 8-9). So we might gather up the tremendous amount that there is which bears down upon that identification of the Son with the Father, of Christ with God. Our special point at the moment is this, that we are not dealing with two, we are dealing with one. That is to say, we are not meeting Christ apart from God, apart from the Father. When we meet Him and have dealings with Him, we meet God.

And, what is more, from the other side God refuses to meet us on any other ground but the ground of His Son. "No man cometh to the Father, but by me" (John xiv. 6), and any going to God independently of, and apart from, the Son will have but one result: the Father will refer us to the Son, He will not act apart. The oneness is absolute and is divinely, sacredly, jealously safeguarded and preserved. It is identification.

The history of Israel since then can be summed up on that one principle, that one law. Israel refused to take account of Christ as God's Son, set Him aside and essayed to approach God, and found a closed door. From that day the door to God has been closed to Israel. The Father has very effectively and forcefully said to Israel, There is no independent way; if it means a thousand or two thousand years, time will not alter this; you will still be at the place where you will have to come by way of the Son if you are going to find Me! That is the position to-day with Israel. God is jealous over this thing.

Why is this? The answer could be given in quite a number of ways, but, for our present consideration, it is a matter of God's intention to bring Christ His Son into the inheritance which He has appointed for Him, the dominion. "Adam was a figure of him that was to come" (Rom. v. 14), and God had said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion" (Gen. i. 26). That "them" is very significant. We will not follow it for a moment. "Let them have dominion."—"A figure of him that was to come." Says the writer of the Hebrew letter, "Not unto angels did he subject the world to come, whereof we speak. But one hath somewhere testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet...But now we see not yet all things subjected to him. But we behold him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour." (Heb. ii. 5-9). Here is the Antitype, here is the greater than Adam, here is the One of Whom Adam was a figure, eternally destined to have

dominion, with all things put under Him, Jesus, and God is keeping very close to His arrangement concerning His Son. The Son is the supreme and all-inclusive representative of God for executive purposes in dominion, and their oneness is absolute. So it is that, if all God's purposes are bound up with and vested in His Son, He must bring that Son into His place, that must be His supreme business, that the Son shall there be as God.

That thought is an Old Testament thought in type, as well as a New Testament thought in reality. You know right through the Old Testament God had His representatives, and those representatives were in their day as God here. The statement to Moses is a very utter one. When the Lord was sending Moses to Pharaoh, He said to him, "You shall be as God to Pharaoh" (Ex. vii. 1), and in effect, in actual out-working, when Pharaoh met Moses, he met God, and was having to do with God. Whether it were the patriarchs, or whether it were the prophets, by reason of their Divine appointment, they were there as God, dealing with them was dealing with God. The very term "Son of Man" as used in the Old Testament implies that representation, God represented; and God not as apart, God standing by, God committed, God involved. No matter how long you may have to wait, the end is absolutely sure.

Jeremiah represents God on the spot. Well, they may do all sorts of things with Jeremiah: they may refuse his word, drop him into the dungeon, well-nigh kill him, so that officials will go to the king, and say, Unless you take that man up, he will die! They may do that, and years may roll by and it may seem that Jeremiah has not been vindicated, but it will be written, Now at a certain given time in the reign of Cyrus that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah the prophet should be fulfilled... (Ezra i. 1). It does not matter, wait as long as you like, do what you like, it is God you are dealing with; representation. Oh, the Old Testament is full of it in principle, but it is all gathered up into Christ; He is the sum and the total of it all.

It is not necessary for me in a company like this to stress this great fact, that we have to deal with God when we touch the Lord Jesus. When we have to do with the Lord Jesus, we are dealing with God in a far greater way than was true with any prophet of the Old Testament, and it was great enough then.

The Church's Identification with Christ

But what are we leading to? Well, along this line of representation on a basis of identification, we come to this present dispensation, and the nature of it. This present dispensation is the dispensation of the Church, and the Church is here on this very ground, and if you and I have been baptized into Christ, we have been baptized into His Body. Do not let us think of the Church as something objective and apart from ourselves. We are in this, it has to become a matter of personal application as we speak, not thinking objectively of the Church, but thinking of ourselves as members of Christ.

Well now, this identification with Christ works out in exactly the same way as did Christ's identification with the Father. That is why I read Eph. v. 21-32 about husbands and wives and wives and husbands, and why I emphasized that strange word in Genesis—"Let *them* have dominion": and you noticed that it is followed out again in Genesis v. 1-2. "In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; male and female created he them, and blessed them, and called their name Adam", called *their* name Man. That passage in Eph. v. about husbands and wives brings out this principle here, and if we could just see that, I am sure it would be tremendously helpful, and lift us away from modern views in this world on this matter. There is this eternal thought, this Divine thought, back of this relationship, this thought of God in representation on a basis of identification, and the phrase to be underlined there is, *even as* Christ and the Church, the Church and Christ. The oneness here, the identification, is the Divine thought and intent. You are not dealing with two things here, two independent lives, two persons apart. "He made them male and female, and called them Man", called a plural a singular! And that is what He does with Christ and the Church; that is what He did between Himself and the Son, called a plural a singular, in effect. And He is saying here in other words, that a wife loses her own independent identity when she is married, she loses her own name, she lets go her own separate life. Now her one single idea is the life and vocation of her husband, into which she merges herself, and the twain become one, even as the Church Christ. When we come into the Church, we abandon our own independent separate identity. All that is ours personally and privately is yielded up and we are merged into the Body of Christ, so that the Church and Christ are one flesh, the twain are one. I know that modern views on woman's place in this world will not accept that, but you are not bothered about modern views: but I hope you are just as strong on these principles. Lift it here.

God has vested in His Son everything, and you inherit everything. The Lord is simply saying about this earthly relationship that it is meant to be a representation of that heavenly thing, that if that relationship between husbands and wives and wives and husbands were as it is meant to be, the husband would be standing for God in this world, as a servant, a minister of God—do not misunderstand that; I do not mean he would put a clerical collar on and go into "the ministry"—he is standing as representative of God in a positive way, and his wife would be working into that, the results of that; not herself apart in independent ministry and life, not pulling another way, but yielding all that is personal to that. That is the Divine idea, and in that way she would come into the Divine endowments, the Divine vocation, the Divine blessing; she would get her portion in that relatedness and, with the loss of what is merely personal and private, in the larger. That is the Divine thought, and the Divine blessing lies in

that direction and not in any other direction. Take that, but do not take it as merely a human idea, as the modernist and the people of the world say, That is Paul's idea about women and we do not accept this! This is a Divine thought going right back, and its vision is Christ and the Church, the Church and Christ.

The point is, it is identification, that on this line where that relationship is right, the effect is this, that when you meet the wife, you meet the husband. I mean this, that she will not act on her own independently, she will express the mind of her husband, she will refer to the husband, and in meeting her you will have to meet the husband. It is no use trying to get round some other way in this kind of woman, to get her to take a line on the quiet when her husband is absent. Oh no, you cannot get her away from her husband; she is bound up there, so one that you cannot meet her apart from him. It is not a matter of whether the husband is present or absent, seen or invisible; you are meeting him all the time. That is the relationship.

The Lord is saying this about Christ and the Church, and He is saying the identification is so one that when you meet the Church, the members of His Body, you are not meeting something apart, you are meeting Him. "Lo, I am with you all the days, even unto the end of the age" (Matt. xxviii. 20). That is the principle. That is not merely an individual thing, that is said to the Church: the nucleus was there and it was said to the Church. "I am with you always, even unto the consummation of the age." "I am with you." How? In the midst, right there in you by the Spirit.

Identification and Authority

And that is the meaning of these other words, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit: whosoever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them" (John xx. 22-23). That is tremendous: the Church in the position of Christ saying, Thy sins be forgiven thee. Yes, the Church under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, if really filled with the Spirit, if the Church is Spirit-governed, that is its right, its prerogative to say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee"; on the terms, of course, that condition all forgiveness, namely, repentance and faith. "Whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." The Church says, Look here, my brother, my sister, you are violating a Divine principle and putting yourself out of court, and we assure you most solemnly before God that you have no way with God until you put that right: on the authority of the Holy Ghost we say that to you. And God stands by, and it does not matter, you may wait a generation, a lifetime, that brother, that sister, will not get through, apart from obedience to that counsel. They think the day is coming when they are going to be vindicated along their own line. Not at all! They will die unvindicated if they have not recognised that, in a Holy Spirit governed representation of the Church, they are dealing with Christ.

Of course, I know that the Roman Church has

taken this very thing, and it is upon this very basis the Roman Church exists and operates, but of course in a temporal realm. They have brought it down from Holy Ghost government and made it purely a priest-craft matter. Wherever you get truth you will get error that simulates truth, a counterfeit of the true. But the truth is here, and it is a tremendous thing to be in the Body of Christ; and it is a tremendous thing to be in a local representation of that Body of Christ, the Church. It brings you on to executive ground, and I do feel so strongly that what is needed in our day, perhaps more than anything else, is for the Church as represented to function, the Church really to function in local representation. There seems to be such a call for a new functioning of the Church in its local expression along the line of prayer, and prayer that is of an executive character.

In Jerusalem there was the Church, and we mark that again and again they are found in prayer. When Peter is in prison, the Church made prayer unto God. It acted over this matter, and it brought the Lord in on the ground of Psalm ii, and Peter was released. Church function—I submit it to you that this is a great need, that the Lord should have locally represented this Body, which is Himself in expression, Himself in effect, Himself in execution, doing it there in them, through them, by the Holy Ghost. It is that which is called for to-day in a new way, for meeting this tremendous on-drive of the forces of evil. Who amongst the Lord's people is unconscious of that on-drive of evil forces? What is going on in the world to-day? You can see the counterpart of this war in the spiritual realm in almost every detail; intense malignancy, evil, poison, hatred, violence and lies and misrepresentation; that the time is short; and a gathering up of every diabolical bit of ingenuity for destruction. And here within the last days we have had a revival of talk about gas, the idea being that the time is short, the day is drawing in; the enemy will resort to any device, however wicked. That is the idea. But look away from this. You see that in the spiritual realm, you feel it. The enemy is out to crush, to cripple, to annihilate the true children of God if he can, and his intensity was never greater. Why? Because his time is short. "The devil is gone down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time" (Rev. xii. 12). The day is drawing in for him.

How is it going to be met? I again submit it to you that it is the Church that has to meet this. I confess that I cannot meet this alone; you cannot meet it alone. We have to have co-operation, we have to come on to our ground of identification with Christ and let Christ representatively meet this thing. None other but Christ can meet it, but He can. "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth . . . and I am with you" (Matt. xxviii. 18, 20). That cannot be just taken for granted. It seems to me that the Church has to come into a faith position on that ground and act with Christ. I submit that to you for what it is worth, but I feel intensely about it myself, that there is a great call and need for the

Lord's children where they are, as representing the Church, even though they be but two or three in any given locality, really to act in this matter executively in the name of the Lord. "In the name of Jesus"—it is only another way of saying, Representatively we say, representatively we act, it is Christ by us; given always that the Holy Spirit has His place. Well, you

see, identification means representation. That oneness with the Lord means that the Lord has a way to express Himself. Well, that opens up all those matters of oneness with the Lord, unhindered oneness, unsullied oneness with the Lord, so that He has a free way of expression.

(To be continued)

A Jigsaw Puzzle

A Message to Young Christians—and Others

READING: Eph. ii. 21; iv. 12-13, 15-16; i. 22-23.

I suppose most of us have, at some time or another, fallen under the spell of a jigsaw puzzle. It is one of those things which get hold of you, and when you have started you do not want to give it up. It draws you on, and it is not the sort of thing you like to leave overnight to start on again in the morning. Well, here, in what we have just read, we have God's great jigsaw puzzle, and when you put these different passages together, or read them together, you have got the original. It is an exceedingly difficult thing to come to a jigsaw puzzle without having the original, the picture of what you are going to make; you do not know what it amounts to at all. But here is the original, here is the perfect, unbroken picture. God made that picture it says here "before the world was"; and it is the picture of what? Well, that is what we are going to look at. But I would suggest to you that you do read these passages together again in order to see the original, and, as we come to it now, we find it all broken up into the jigsaw. That is to say, while the picture is here, when we come to the practical side of things, we find that it is all in pieces, all in fragments, large and small fragments, all apparently uneven and jagged, crooked pieces. The whole thing has been broken up; it is all a jumble.

The Original

The original is a very wonderful picture. Right at the centre of this picture is a Man—"A fullgrown man...the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ". That is right at the very centre of God's original picture. Then it says in the other passages that we are parts of that Man. I expect, if we saw the full picture, we would have to take in lots of things that are in the background. They are all scattered through the Old Testament, they are the background. There are sheep and lambs, and oxen, and goats, and doves, and priests, and kings, and prophets, and altars, and all these things are in the picture, in the background, and they all have something to do with that Man at the centre. They all in some way relate to that Man. I will not stay now to try to show how that is so, but some of us can at once see that the lambs of the Old Testament all have something to do with this central Figure, this Man Who Himself was called "The Lamb of God". We can see how

the priests all pointed to Him, stand there in this great picture in relation to Him. Well, all that is a big, vast, comprehensive picture.

The Pieces

But we have said that we are here spoken of as parts of that Man. "Till we all attain...unto...the stature of the fulness of Christ". We are all parts of the Man, and that means that in this seeming great jumble of pieces, in God's great pattern and purpose every part has its place. We know that is true in the jigsaw puzzle. It may look a strange bit, but we know that every bit has its own place. It is no use trying to fit it somewhere else. How we have tried in our puzzles sometimes to get a piece to fit in where we wanted it to; but it would not, it did not belong. We have had to spend a lot of time to find the piece that fits just that place, and we have been compelled to recognise the fact that every bit has its place. It is no use trying to put it anywhere, it belongs to a certain place; and that is what is said here. "From whom *all the body fitly framed* and knit together through that which every joint supplieth" (iv. 16). Every bit has its place. That is true of us. It is one of the great lessons we have to learn in our relationship to the Lord Jesus, in our Christian lives, that we have our place and we will not fit in anywhere else, and we will never be happy until we are really in our place. Let us learn that lesson. That is a truth which the Word of God teaches. Each bit in the great plan of God has its place. You have your place, and I have mine.

Fitting into Place

The next thing is this, that every bit is a problem until it is in its place. Notice what it says in the second half of that sixteenth verse of Chap. iv—"according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body". Now in our puzzle we pick up a little bit, or several little bits, and we look at them, and they are a real problem to us. We cannot see what they mean, there is nothing complete on any one bit. It may just be a little bit of blue, a little fragment of red, a little touch of green, and lots of angles, corners, a real problem in itself. And we are real problems in ourselves, but the problem disappears immediately

when you get the piece into its place. We have no longer a problem when that bit has found its place. I would like to say a lot to older Christians about this, but I am trying to be as simple as I can. You must look at things beyond what I am saying. What a lot of problems there are about because people are not in their place, not fitting in. They *will not* fit in, perhaps. They are out of their place, and they are awkward and useless, and things are not at all easy. Let us remember that we shall be problems to ourselves and to others until our place is found where we belong. Each life has its place, and each one will be a problem until it is in its place, and that place has been accepted.

Each Piece Explanatory of the Other

Now another thing. Each several part makes an explanation for another part. That is a point not easy to grasp perhaps. Here are all these parts and each part can only be explained as you find another part that fits into it. That is to say, each part explains the other. Now, here is something with a certain mark on it. It may just be the finger of the hand, the toe of the foot. Now here is the other part which has some more of that foot or that hand, and neither of these can be explained until you get the complement, the other piece, to fit in there, so that each part explains the other.

And when the Lord, by His Spirit, does unite His people, bring them together in His own wonderful pattern, He does this ; He makes one the complement of the other, He makes complete another or others by bringing that one into his or her place. And the Lord is seeking to bring His people together in a right way to be helps to one another. He is not having just a jumble of unrelated pieces or people. He is not just bringing them together like so many unrelated things. He is fitting in, so that you can really be a help to me and I can be a help to you. You have something to give to me, and I have something to give to you, and no one else can do just that. You may go right over a whole mass of pieces in a puzzle and you may not find more than a piece in the whole that will fit into a certain place. You may try to get another piece to fit in there, but it will not. It wants *this* piece to fit in *there*, to help *there*. It is like that with Christians. There is something that you may be able to give me, in which you can help me ; no one else can do that. I may be able to help you in a way in which no one else can help you. The Lord has perhaps dealt with me in such a way, put me through such experiences, that I can help you—not more than another can help you, but in a way in which perhaps no one else can help you ; and the same with one another.

Why does the Lord deal thus with us ?—Why all this cutting about, and so many angles, nothing seeming to be straight in our experience ? Why has the Lord dealt with us in this way ? Why does the Lord single out experiences for us so different from most other peoples' experiences ? Just to make us able to help somebody in a way that no one else can.

We all have our particular usefulness to the Lord. How often we have had to say in our lives about certain people. Oh, So-and-so was able to help me as no one else had been able to do ! So-and-so just had the experience or the word that I have been looking for ; I have asked many, but they have never been able to help me ! The Lord may be dealing with you and me in this strange way of carving out, cutting about, this jigsaw business which is such a puzzle in our own experience, in order to fit us into the whole in such a way that we can help one another as no one else can. It says so here—" that which every joint supplieth " ; " the whole body fitly framed and knit together through that which *every* joint supplieth ". Every bit of the puzzle maketh increase for the whole, and every bit for the other, not for itself.

Every Piece Necessary

Then one more thing. Of course, every bit of this puzzle makes the other bits necessary. Until the thing is finished, until the thing is really completed, as you put the bit in its place what have you done ? You have increased the fulness, got nearer to completeness, but you still have some angles. You have only made something more necessary. You say, Now I want this, I cannot get on until I have this ! So that last bit has made this next bit necessary. The New Testament is full of this sort of thing. It speaks about how others are necessary to this whole. One is necessary to another, and each one is necessary to the whole. " The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee : or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you " (I Cor. xii. 21). We are all needed by one another, we make one another necessary, and the whole thing can never be complete until we have learned that. Some people think they are complete in themselves. That is not what the Bible teaches. Some people think if they are together in a little group, they are complete in themselves. Not at all ! This is going to require the whole of that vast mass called " the church which is his body ". None of us can ever know how big that is and how many pieces there are ; and every one is needed by the other. That is what the Word teaches, and we are forbidden to have any such thought that we can do without anyone, can dispense with another. The Holy Spirit, speaking through Paul, says so clearly that the least member is necessary. It is a big lesson to learn ; *each piece makes the other necessary*.

The Key

Well now, what is the key to this puzzle ? What do you do when you get a new jigsaw puzzle and you sit down to work it out ? Well, in my little experience, I have always tried to get something that I think is the central thing or the most important thing in the whole picture, and have put that down, and worked to that. I usually sweep aside all the little bits of green and blue and get something distinctive. If I can get a man's face, I have something to work to ; I know what will come round a face. You have to

have the crown of his head, an ear, a neck. It is all right if you have something distinctive; and here it is—"and gave him to be head over all things to the church which is his body". The key to everything is the headship of the Lord Jesus. We will never get fitted in until Jesus is in His place as Head; we will not fit in with Him or one another until He is Head, until He is Lord. It takes the lordship of Jesus to get us all into our place and our relationship with one another. If we are all jumbled and up against one another, awkward pieces, the thing to put us straight is to make Jesus Lord. If we really accept the lordship of Jesus, then that is going to have a working out in this way, that we get into line with one another. It is going to be hard. The Word says that you cannot say you love God and at the same time not love your brother (I John iv. 20). "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar". It cannot be done. If we love the Lord, we cannot be unloving toward one another. If He is Lord really in our hearts, then things will get straightened out between us and others. That must be so, that is what it says. So the key to the whole is the headship of the Lord Jesus. Put Him there in His place as Lord, and we will move on quickly toward the adjustment of all the other parts and little bits.

Living Pieces

Well now, there is another thing I would like to say. We are all forming this one great pattern, but we are doing so only as we are under the control of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is making this picture, we are not making it. The Holy Spirit is carrying out this design, the Holy Spirit is going to realise this great end of God. He is the One Who is doing it, operating it all, but we are not just like little bits of cardboard. This is where there is a difference between us and any jigsaw puzzle. We are living bits, and the Holy Spirit needs to have us working with Him, co-operating with Him, responding to Him. Then the Holy Spirit says, This is your place! We say, I do not like that place, I would like to be in some other place! The Holy Spirit says, This is what you are for! We say, I would like to be something else than that! The Holy Spirit says, This is your shape! And we say, I do not like it, I would like to be another! Anything like that, and the thing cannot go on. We have to know the Holy Spirit, walk in the Spirit, live in the Spirit, respond to the Spirit, and the Spirit will do the rest. But it is a matter of obedience to the Lord, obeying the Holy Spirit, being moved by the Spirit and being responsive to the Spirit.

The Complete Whole

Now all this is perhaps going to take a long time.

It has taken a few hundred years so far. It may take a bit longer yet, but it is going to be finished; and then God is going to show His wonderful completed picture to the whole universe. "When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believed" (II Thess. i. 10). The day is coming when all that believe will look and say, Well, I could not understand what the Lord was doing, I could not at the time rejoice in the place in which the Lord put me; it was all so strange, I could not see how it fitted in; I see it all now! He was working to a perfect design; it is marvellous! "To be marvelled at in all them that believe". We have to believe that the Lord, in all this strange seeming mess and mixture, and jumble, and puzzle is working a perfect design, a perfect pattern; it is all going to work out all right and be perfect in the end. There are a lot of pieces yet lost, and what a trouble these lost pieces are, these pieces that are out of the way. The New Testament is full of that which speaks of pieces out of the way, pieces which have gone astray, which are lost. Paul had his hands full of trying to get those pieces back again, following them up, searching them out, gathering them in. We have to work in that way to bring in the lost pieces, to recover those that have strayed. It is a lot of work, but that is our work. The Lord, by His Spirit as we work with Him, will accomplish His perfect design. In the end it will be very wonderful.

I remember a story about the late Bishop of Durham, Dr. Handley Moule. There was a great colliery disaster in Durham about Christmas-time in which many of the miners were lost, buried alive. When this took place they sent for the Bishop, and he came down to the pithead; and there were all the wives and children of those miners in a terrible state, and he did not know what to say to them. He began to speak, and he said, We cannot understand this strange way that God has taken, we cannot see what He is doing, but it is like one of those things that you work on linen; you are working to a design, but at present you can only see the background, and when you look on the back of the piece of linen, you know it is an awful jumble, all the threads are crossed, you cannot see anything at all; but then you turn it over and you see the perfect design. Just now, that is what God is doing; He is doing something, but we are only seeing the back of it, all the jumble of crossed threads. Presently the day will come when He will turn it over and we shall see what He has been doing—a perfect picture! That is only another way of talking about a jigsaw puzzle. The Lord teach us the lessons, and help us to respond to them and fit in, by His grace.

T.A.S.

A Thought from the Easter Conference

"What is the Service of God in this dispensation? The deliverance of an elect people from this world, for the Lord, and the bringing of them into the fulness of Christ."

The Indwelling and Manifestation of Christ in the Saints

READING: John xvi. 6-11, 16-20; xiv. 23, 26; xvii. 20-23; xii. 23-25; xvi. 16-22.

The Lord has been impressing upon one's heart this matter of our oneness of life, and the Divine intention that is bound up therewith. It is not merely the fact of oneness that we have here, but it is a kind of oneness. How much it meant to the Lord Jesus. You see, it is really brought out here as the explanation of His life among men.

"Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I say unto you I speak not from myself: but the Father abiding in me doth his works" (John xiv. 10).

How much lay behind that testimony of His concerning the very secret of His person here amongst men! And then consider further that, through the Cross and exaltation of His Son, and the coming of the Spirit, it was a like oneness that God purposed between Christ and the saints! "That they may be one, even as we."

The Spirit's coming is something we are apt to take very much for granted, as something that could quite simply and easily be, and we forget there was a great cost attendant upon it, and that a deep foundation had first to be laid before it was possible at all. The Spirit comes to us as the Spirit of the crucified and exalted Lord, on the ground of blood outpoured, of a death died, and upon that ground alone. Moreover, from the birth of our Lord Jesus as man right through to the Cross, the Holy Spirit was at the very heart of all those intimate and inward interchanges of fellowship between the Father and the Son, and the very source and secret of the enablement for that so costly outpouring of the blood and the tasting of death for every man. From first to last it was through the eternal Spirit that our Lord Jesus as man offered Himself without spot to God. Thus it is the Spirit is given, and comes to us; to the intent that, in the words of the scripture, "they may be one, even as we are one." By the impartation of one holy life to all who believe on the Son of God, an organic oneness is established in the saints, with one another, and with Christ as Head, a oneness which is the same oneness as that between the Father and the Son as Man (John xvii. 23). And abundance of life was the end in view, unto the display of His glory.

Fulness Related to Purpose

Pentecost has been made altogether an individual matter in our day, the hunting after power, after personal satisfaction, and we find ourselves defeated, and not coming into fulness. Does not the explanation lie in the fact that fulness is related to God's purpose in Christ, and to a vessel for its realisation and out-working? As by the Spirit we come to see this in our hearts, the Lord brings us to our place and into our share in the anointing, and ever on into

deeper fulness as we are in right relation to His revealed will in Christ Jesus. I believe that to be very important, because it adjusts the whole of our inquiry and outlook and brings us into line with what God is seeking, and into the way therefore of fulness.

The Law of Increase

In John xii. we first of all have to do with the way by which the Lord Jesus could Himself become the very life of His own: for that is what God had appointed; to have a people whose very life should be His Christ, thereby to set Him forth, even as He had manifested forth the Father. That end could only be realised by death. *That is the only way to increase.*

"Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit."

And then you notice the application is widened, for it immediately goes on to say, "He that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." The disciple shall be as his master, and the servant as his lord. The whole way and law of increase is here; and the increase is the increase not of ourselves, but of His life in us.

The Transition from a Life in the Soul to a Life in the Spirit

In John xvi. we have the record of a transition from one kind of knowledge to another in the experience of the Twelve, and this law has its spiritual application in the history of everyone of us. There is a passing away of a certain kind of knowledge even of Christ, as 2 Cor. v. 14-16 again reminds us. Our early knowledge of Him stands so largely in our own conception of Divine things, in the strength and power of the natural mind and wisdom. That which the Lord may show us so quickly becomes clothed with our own interpretation and thoughts. We scarcely suspect how strong a thing is the mind of nature, its thinking, its willing, its working. And the service of our day is so largely this: but how far it all is from the glory of what God ever intended even for now!

If ever we are to come into God's true desire, there must come a day when the wind up from the wilderness lays low all this that has been, to make way for the true glory which God intended. Death lays hold of the life, and we go down into the valley, and everything we had or held seems lost.

"Behold, I go forward, but he is not there;
And backward, but I cannot perceive him;
On the left hand, when he doth work, but I
cannot behold him;
He hideth himself on the right hand, that I
cannot see him."

(Job xxiii. 8-9).

We have experience of the struggle to recover what we had, to give new life to it, to rekindle it, but we find ourselves baffled and broken, and God Himself appears to flee us.

Well, what is overtaking the life in such a day as that? There is being borne in upon the life, as no other kind of dealing could effect it, the real nature of self, the deep unspeakable reality of its corruption, its filthiness and deceit, its vanity and implacable enmity (c.f. Jer. xvii. 9). Can you not hear the testiness of baffled nature in those questionings of the disciples in John xvi. 17-18? As for God, we learn now, as at no other time, that He will not be handled nor held by it, nor be the prisoner of its craftiness and cunning as it seeks to bind Him to its own desires and ends. No, in love He must work to bring the whole to death, to make way for a Life that is life indeed to come to its full place in us, to reign and rule in us. And it is in this way that it dawns at length upon us that His gift to us is a Life wholly other than our own.

But the way thereto—and the more so if it is to be more than the question of our simple possession

of it; if the glory is to be manifested forth—the way thereto is this way of death. *It is the only way to the knowledge of God in the Spirit, and every one of us must, in our measure, come this way, to be of any value to the Lord.* And because we know this fact by teaching, we shall find that the self-life will all the time be grabbing at the hour of resurrection, and trying to persuade itself that the death-experience is passed, and to land itself on the brighter side. But the thing has to be done in truth in the inward parts, and in the most practical ways righteousness has to be raised up there, and wisdom also and knowledge. And not only of this crisis period does the law hold good, but right to the end it abides as the law of all increase.

This may seem a hard word to receive, but, beloved, we must view it from the standpoint of what God has in mind, to have a people in whom the glory of His Son is manifested forth, through His becoming their life and their all. Again therefore we say, This is the way thereto. The Lord hasten the revealing of His glory in us.
K.P.O.

The Cross, The Church and the Conflict

No. 2 (continued)

The Church According to God's Thought

Well then, if the Church is the Divine outcome of the Cross, it must define the nature and meaning of the Cross. What does the Cross do? What is the function of the Cross? We have viewed that in three directions in our previous meditation—God-ward, man-ward and Satan-ward. Now, let us see it in one or two other connections which touch all three of these at the same time.

The Cross an End to All Idolatry

Firstly, the Cross puts an end to all idolatry. Take that away and think about it. It is a long story, and it is a very far-reaching story, is idolatry. I am going to say something which would take a very long time to verify, so far as the data and events are concerned, but which can be verified from the beginning to the end of the Scriptures. It is this: if we knew the truth, idolatry lies behind *everything* for which the Cross of Christ came into being, and when the Cross is really made active, what it is doing is to deal with idolatry—in some form or another. Now that, perhaps, you cannot grasp for the moment. But we will go a little way further with it.

You see, the Cross, right at its very heart and centre, relates to worship. That is the final word, the ultimate matter in this universe, and now the universe has become Cross-centric; that is, the Cross of Christ now, since the Fall, has become the centre of this universe, and that Cross is to touch this universe from centre to circumference. There is a centrality and universality of the Cross, and at the very centre and

circumference of this universe the one thing which is pre-eminent is worship. If you understand what worship is, then idolatry is simply, but comprehensively, anything and everything which in principle takes from, or even tends to take from, *the utterness of God as the very life of man.* God has made Himself the spring, the source, the centre of man's life, and for his life man is utterly dependent upon God, and can only find his life in God. God has bound man to Himself inseparably for his life, and will not allow man to have life, in the real sense, apart from Himself. He has made it a law in His universe that man cannot live apart from God, in the sense in which God means him to live and in God's meaning of life. God is man's life. Anything which becomes for man a substitute for God in life, for God Himself for life, is idolatry. Anything that draws man away from God, or tends to draw man away from God, is idolatry in principle: and, mark you, it is God Himself in Person Who is man's life, and man's centre. In a moment, I will say more about what that means.

What Idolatry Is

Idolatry is all that is not God as the basis or object of man's life. That is tremendously comprehensive. We think of idolatry, of course, in terms of heathen idols. We might perhaps bring it into a closer realm, where people clearly put things in the place of God; but oh! it goes much deeper than that, and, in the Scriptures, idolatry is never regarded as merely negative or passive. There idolatry is always seen to

be an active thing, inasmuch as it is the work of an intelligence which is opposed to God; and that Satanic intelligence is always making it its first object and aim, persistently, continuously, and by every means, to get something into the place of the Lord personally. You see, it is possible to have the things of the Lord in the place of the Lord Himself; and that is idolatry in principle. Yes, it may be the things of Jehovah, not other gods. In place of the Lord, Who is the object of man's life, His things may be given precedence, and in principle that is idolatry, and the Cross is ever being used by the Holy Spirit to strike at everything, no matter what it is, that comes to occupy the place of the Lord Himself, the place that the Lord Himself should occupy. Idolatry is always religious, and it may be the Christian religion as well as any other religion that is marked by idolatry.

I am saying some strong things, but there is cause. You see, idolatry exists in principle whenever or wherever anything, even good in itself, becomes an object in itself rather than God, the Lord Himself. There are many things which are not only harmless but good in themselves, which have, nevertheless, been allowed to take the place of the Lord Himself, and good things can therefore embody the principle of idolatry in the one in whom the devotion is found. Touch some Christians, or Christian institutions, and let the touch be even in relation to something more of the Lord Himself, and you will find an uprising of jealous regard for the institution which utterly blinds to that possibility of an extra measure of the Lord Himself. You can be so devoted to a denomination, a missionary society, a piece of Christian work, that there is no room for any extra measure of the Lord. The thing itself has become the end, the object for which you live, and when the Lord wants to get you moved on into something more of Himself, the obstacle is that good Christian work, association, institution, tradition, connection. Yes, and that is idolatry in principle, and we see from history how the Lord again and again has had to smite with smashing blows things which in themselves were good, in order to save His people unto Himself personally. Even things which He gave at one time, have had to be taken away or shattered because the gift has become the end, the object. That is what is happening to-day; and a very necessary thing it is too. The Lord is not protecting good things to-day. If those things have become something to which men have become devoted, with which they have become bound up, He is allowing them to be broken and destroyed.

God Himself Man's Life and Entire Good

What is He after? It is Himself which He is seeking to establish as the object of man's life, and not the things that have relation to Himself; and I say again, you meet something intensely fierce if you touch a thing, even though you are touching it maybe with a view to getting people to move on with the Lord Himself. To put that in the other way,

if your appeal for moving on with the Lord seems to people to involve their having to move away from this or that or some other thing, then there is warfare; which shows that Satan in his eternal campaign of idolatry has got a footing amongst Christians in relations to things which take the place of the Lord Himself, good things though they be in themselves; and you find, if you are spiritually sensitive, that you are not just encountering the established institutions, but you are encountering a terrific spiritual force. Is that true? It is true. Had I never come up against it, never would I have believed the terrific force there is lying behind. Christian institutions if your ministry touches them. You meet something which turns upon you, and it is not just the thing or the people. It is something that threatens your very life, to slay, and this in principle and essence, beloved, is idolatry; because its ultimate effect is that even the Lord cannot have what His heart is set upon and get His people spiritually where He wants them, because they are so bound up with His things. They are not able to discriminate between His things and Himself.

The Cross will deal with all that, and the wonderful thing is that this is just the spontaneous effect of a real work of the Cross, when it is by the Holy Ghost. Now, put it to the test, or bring in your test cases. What about Saul of Tarsus? You touch the institutions of Saul of Tarsus, Judaism and its whole system, you touch it and see what you meet. You not only meet the strength of a bigot, you meet the spiritual force of hell; and so it was. What is there in God's universe that can meet that, deal with that, break that down, put that out of the way, so that it no longer has any power over the man? There is no force in God's universe save the Cross of the Lord Jesus. That will do it; and it did it, and it did it right there on the spot. It was not a case of growing out of Judaism, absorbing new ideas which supplanted the old; the thing was done. The Cross, Jesus Christ crucified, did it. Yes, and there are many other cases like that. The Cross does come with shattering power, if it gets a chance, upon those things which take the Lord's place, and gives Him a real way to become Himself the life, as He has determined to be, the All which He has claimed to be. The Cross does that. It gets rid of idolatry, not only in its various forms, but in its very principle, and in this way destroys the works of the Devil, removes the ground of Satanic strength. The Cross of the Lord Jesus gives God His full place, His utter place.

This may further explain why it is that the Lord has to take away things which He Himself gave, His own gifts, why the Lord seeks to have us hold everything in relation to Himself, and not as something in itself; that is, to keep us in that detached way inwardly, so that at any time we can without any difficulty let go our position, our ministry, our work for the Lord—anything, everything. We hold it for the Lord. Others can come and take our place, and there be no jealousy, no debate. That is why the Lord could speak so highly about Moses. Moses, My

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(continued from back page)

servant! Moses, the man of God! These are the titles, the designations, of Moses. Why? Well, you remember Moses' position was challenged by certain in Israel. "Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken by us also?" And again later, when the company of Dathan and Abiram chided with both him and Aaron: "Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?" What did Moses do? Fight for his position, seek to vindicate himself? Did he go into dark despair because he saw that his place was being usurped or challenged? No, he just went to the Lord and, in effect, said, If You put me into this position, while You want me here You must look after me and see to it that I am able to fulfil my ministry: if You want me out of the way, I am quite ready to stand out; if You want them in, it is all right! Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets! He took that position, and the Lord said, I can come alongside of a situation like that, I can commit Myself there: and He did. You know what happened to the company of Dathan and Abiram. The meekness of Moses is the great feature of his life. "The man Moses was very meek, above all the men that were upon the face of the earth" (Num-

bers xii. 3). What did that mean in Moses' case: He held everything for the Lord, in relation to the Lord Himself, not for himself; and there is no difficulty whatever at any time in letting any given thing go when that is the case.

But oh, that is not always so with Christians. You chance to touch their work, or get in the way of their ministry, and you meet something. It is idolatry. Well, the Cross deals with that, and when the Cross has done its work in us, we will be very meek; in this sense, that we hold things only in relation to the Lord and His glory, and we have no difficulty in letting them go. We can stand back quite easily and let others go on. It is for the Lord to decide, and we give the Lord a clear way. The Cross does that. Beloved, no one need ever worry about the fulfilment of their ministry if, by the work of the Cross in them, they are thus abandoned to the Lord's interests. The Lord will see that, in the long run, that which He intended will be realised through that life, whatever men and demons do. It may not be as they thought it would be, but it will be. The values of their lives will be conserved by God, and not lost. All that is to the contrary is in principle idolatry, and the Cross is against it. That is why, as we were saying, the Lord so often has to take away His own gifts, because in the course of time they have taken His place.

(To be continued)

NEXT SPECIAL GATHERINGS AT HONOR OAK

(If the Lord wills)

May 27-29 (Whitsun)

Saturday, 3.30 and 6.30 p.m.
 Lord's Day, 11 a.m., 3.30 and 6.30 p.m.
 Monday, 11 a.m., 3.30 and 6.30 p.m.

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- S.E.23, 2s. 6d.; London, N.2, 2s.; Los Angeles, Cal., £1 4s. 8d.; Madras City, 10s.; Maidstone, 2s. 6d.; Millfield, 4s.; Monkseaton, 4s.; Murphy, Oregon, £1; Nashville, Tenn., 9s. 10d.; Newcastle-on-Tyne, 10s. and £1; North Bay, Ont., 8s. 11d.; North Wembley, 5s.; Oxted, 3s.; Paisley, £1; Pasadena, Cal., 5s. and 5s.; Pennanenmawr, £1; Perth, £2; Peterboro', Ont., £1 10s.; Phibsborough, 7s. 6d.; Pudsey, 4s.; Purton, 3s. 6d.; Redhill, 11s.; Rufforth, 2s. 6d.; St. Annes on Sea, 15s.; St. Austell, 10s.; St. Ives, 1s.; St. Paul, Minn., £1 4s. 8d.; Sandown, I.O.W., 10s.; Seattle, Wash., 12s. 10d.; Sevenoaks, 15s.; Shirley, 4s. 6d.; S. Pasadena, Calif., £1 15s.; Southport, 10s.; S. Portland, Maine, £3 8s.; South Shields, 5s.; Springfield, Oregon, 5s.; Swalecliffe, 10s.; Swansea, 5s.; Tankerton, 10s. and 2s.; Theydon Bois, 2s. 6d.; Tonbridge, 2s. 6d.; Toronto, 10s.; Tyneside, 3s.; Wakefield, £2; Watchet, 10s.; Waterfoot, 5s.; Woolton Hill, 5s.; Worthing, 2s. 6d.; Yonkers, N.Y., £1 4s. 8d. Total, £75 15s.

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A bi-monthly ministry by which it is sought to lead the Lord's people into His full thought for them.

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JULY—AUGUST, 1944

NO. 4, VOL. 22

Editor's Letter

BELOVED OF GOD,

I am sure that, if you are alive to the present situation, you, with us, are greatly burdened and distressed over it. This must be true with regard to that which obtains in the world, but with many it is equally or more so with regard to the Lord's people. The clearer the perception of the mind of the Lord, the fuller the vision of His purpose, the greater the spiritual sensitiveness, so much the more acute is the suffering over the state of things now. While the world is torn with disruption and warring factions, both in international war and in national internal strife—political, industrial, social, and other ways—the people of God are no less disrupted and weakened by schism, divisions, suspicions, prejudices, personal and party interests, jealousies, rivalries, and misunderstandings. Half truths and untruths about one another—individually and collectively—are everywhere destroying the hope of an adequate fellowship unto the impact of a practical love upon the world.

The consciousness of spiritual weakness, resultant from paucity of conversions and expansion has led many to pray for revival. So there is, on the one hand, a great outreach for revival, and on the other, big efforts to bring it about by large-scale movements and meetings. But what is the position of the Word of God regarding this? Have we anything in the Scriptures which corresponds to this state of things? Surely there is more than enough. It was like this in the time of Eli, when Samuel was brought in, and subsequently David came to the throne. It was like this in the latter days of Israel and Judah when the Prophets prophesied. And it is like this in the first chapters of the Revelation when the Lord addresses the churches in Asia. In any of these places is it Revival that is firstly sought and organised for? That might be an ultimate issue, but in every case the word to the Lord's people was firstly *Repent!* Seven times that is demanded in those messages to the churches (which number itself is significant).

While that repentance is called for in relation to various specific things, put together they represent a position from which the whole Church (with a few individuals as exceptions) had—and has—fallen and departed. Those seven churches were brought into being by the Lord through the instrumentality of His servant Paul. To that servant He gave a specially full revelation of His eternal purpose, and the vessel of its realisation—"the church, which is his body". From Paul, and therefore his revelation, they turned away. "All they in Asia be turned from me" (II Tim. i. 15). But it was from the Lord in His full thought that they turned. It is to *them* that the Head of the Church, moving amidst the seven lampstands (churches) addresses His challenge demanding repentance; and the repentance is for leaving "the first works", or original position. That primal revelation had two main aspects or emphases.

- I. That the Cross of Christ meant the setting aside of man by nature and the exclusion from the realm of God's things of all that is of the Adam creation, so that "all things are of (out from) God".
- II. The oneness of believers as an organic body, interrelated, interdependent, by the power of a common life and the government of a common Head in the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

No. II depends upon and is impossible apart from No. I. No. I should lead spontaneously to No. II.

"Union" as brought about from the outside is not *it*, and will most certainly fail. "Evangelical Union" is inadequate, for it is only a matter of certain doctrines, the selecting of a few foundational truths.

The only hope for the release of the Divine life, the resultant spiritual growth, the reproductiveness in the matter of new births, the rebuff to the schismatic and paralysing work of the Devil, and the recovery of a convincing testimony to the world (for the world no longer believes in the Church) is in a recovery of the position and truth of the great twofold revelation mentioned above.

It will be costly, revolutionary, and terrifically upheaving. All kinds of lesser and contrary grounds and

lines will have to be reconsidered. A "Body" is a *man*, not an institution, organisation, society, denomination, inter-denomination, or "undenomination" (as something apart). It is "The One New Man", and a man or body for effectiveness and full functioning demands an organic co-relatedness of all parts in life. Even the Lord does not seem to expect that all His people will do what is necessary in this matter, but He addresses all, and then says that to those who respond He offers the full outcome of perfect conformity to His mind; and the others—"He will remove their lampstand", or "spew them out of His mouth". There is no promise of revival apart from adjustment to the Lord's revealed mind.

Dear friends, we need to pray, but prayer must be with inquiry—"Lord, what wilt Thou have *me* to do?" May He find us amongst those who will "Follow the Lamb *whithersoever* he goeth".

Yours in the quest for His fullest,

T. AUSTIN-SPARKS

From the Wilderness to the Land

No. 2 (continued)

The Purpose of the Wilderness

The Measure For Which The Lord Looks

What is this stature of which we have spoken? Well, if you investigate the life of Israel in the forty years, you can see something of the meaning of it. Take it, for instance, from the standpoint of reactions, reactions to the situations into which the Lord brought them. The Lord said, I led thee these forty years in the wilderness to prove thee, to try thee, to know what was in thine heart. Really the words there mean more than that; to make thee know what was in thine heart, to bring it to light. It is not as though the Lord did not know their hearts. He knew before the trial was applied, but He put them into a situation to bring it out, to make it manifest. "It was in thine heart"! That could be stated thus, To manifest natural reactions to situations.

Now to-day the situation is one of lack of bread, or to-morrow lack of water, at another time a different situation; and so difficulties, trials, arise along the way of different kinds. What is the reaction? There is nothing wrong with a reaction that is perplexed. There is nothing wrong with a reaction that feels the stress of things. There is nothing wrong with a reaction that says, I do not know what the Lord means by this, I do not know what the Lord is doing with me, I am bewildered! There is nothing wrong with such a reaction at all. But what actually took place was that they were embittered against the Lord. The New Testament way of putting it is, that they hardened their hearts in the day of trial (Heb. iii. 8). They were embittered, they allowed themselves to be soured by trial, they turned in their hearts against the Lord. They lost their concern for the things of the Lord. The way was hard, very hard, but the effect which they allowed the difficulties to have upon them was just that—Oh well, if the Lord does not please me, I have no interest in His affairs; if the Lord does not do what I want Him to do, well, I am just going to let go! That is a state that is nature, a state of the human heart. It is a wrong interpretation of the Lord's way, the Lord's dealings and experiences. That sort of thing can drag on until the heart becomes

stony and the life is lost entirely as a positive thing to the Lord.

The spirit of grace produces another kind of reaction. It does not take the sting out of trial, it does not prevent the trial being a trial and fire being fire, it does not make us insensitive to difficulty, but the spirit of grace, the spirit of faith, says, Well, it is hard, it is difficult, the Lord is not doing what I expected, what I would like; He is doing just the opposite, and in every way He is emptying me and breaking me, and withholding what I in my heart would like; but He knows what He is doing. "He knoweth the way that I take; when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." He knoweth! And, beloved, that is stature, that is measure, that is growth, that answers to Joshua and Caleb whose hearts did not turn back, but who wholly followed the Lord.

Oh, I know this must not be a hard word, and it is not said harshly at all. There is not one of us who has not suffered in this way. We have all got confessions to make about our reactions to the Lord's dealings. Maybe there are some here who have lost the flame, the warmth, who have lost zeal, who are letting go, who are not concerned about the Lord's interests so much as they were, because the Lord has not taken them up along the line of their own desires and expectations and ambitions, but has frustrated all that again and again. If you are there, I want you with me to try to recognise the seriousness of the crisis of that position. My dear friend, whoever you may be, if you are in that particular state or peril just now, a coming need is the strength of appeal for you to stand up and seek to trust the Lord in your dark day in a new way when you cannot understand, to have confidence in Him in this time when you feel that, so far as His ways with you are concerned, they are calculated to undermine all confidence. The Lord has a need which is going to arise, and He is going to need men and women of measure, of stature, and He has been trying to make you such in the light of that coming need.

I do believe that the ordinary Christian resource and Christian life and Christian measure of to-day is

not going to meet the need of a near to-morrow. It is already failing. Leaders, if they only would be honest and confess it—and some have already done so—would say, We are failing, our methods have not succeeded, we are not meeting the situation; the need is beyond us, we have not got what is required! That is more or less recognised by responsible people to-day, and there are many who are deeply aware of that need, but they do not know what to do, where to turn, which way to look: so they just have to stay where they are. If only they knew where to find what they sense to be necessary, they would be there. Is God going to take no account of that? Is He not true to His word, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled"? Is He not going to satisfy the hungry soul? Is there going to be real need, and the Lord be indifferent to it?

But the Lord's way is not to meet it direct from heaven. He needs you, He needs me, but we have to have it to give. We are "stewards of the manifold grace of God." And what is a steward? A steward is one who knows what His Lord has, has an entrée to it, a right to it, and knows what to bring forth for the specific case: a steward, one of understanding and resource. The Lord is needing stewards, He is wanting to make stewards, and that is what He is trying to do with many to-day. He has cut off a great deal that was good. There was nothing wrong with it in itself, but as the good was the enemy of the best, it had to be cut off. We had to be separated unto something. We are not going to judge anybody who may still be in things we have felt we must leave behind; we thank God for every measure there is of Himself however limited. But the Lord in His sovereignty does so work as to deal with a people in the light of a greater need, and that is His message to us to-day. I have less doubt about the truth of that than about anything else. If I am speaking in the name of the Lord at all, that is His word to you. A need is growing, it exists, and it is coming into manifestation, and for this a stewardship will be necessary, men and women of stature, Joshuas and Calebs, and such as those who came out to David, such as have wholly followed the Lord.

Trial is Meant to Yield Measure

Well, what is our reaction to the Lord's dealings with us? Are we less concerned than we once were? If we become petulant, peevish, displeased with the Lord, anything like that, that proves beyond any doubt that we have interests of our own: nature was in this thing, it was not all the Lord. And so it has had to be exposed, we have had to know what was in our hearts.

But there are two ways, you see, even of coming to the place where it does not matter to us what happens to us. Under trial we can come to the place where at length we break away, saying, The Lord does not care, does not hear; oh well, it does not matter; if the Lord is not concerned about it, I'll just let it go! We can drop out like that, petulant, disappointed, soured by trial and adversity: it does not matter, we

have lost interest. That is one position; and you will acknowledge that is not right, there is something wrong with that.

But there is the other position. It does not matter what happens to me, it does not matter what happens to my interests, it does not matter at all whether I myself am used or not in this thing that the Lord wants to do: all that matters is that the Lord gets what He is after, and gets it in His way. So far as I am concerned, what happens to me is quite a secondary matter! That is stature, that is measure, that is Christ. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life" (Mark x. 45). It does not matter what happens to me, so long as the Lord gets what He is after. Does it matter to you? How does it matter? Why does it matter? The answer to that determines our spiritual measure, and it determines whether the Lord is going to be able to meet His need by means of us when that need is manifested. I do not believe the Lord will ever have spiritual measure in a life without using it, without finding a way for it. But oh, so many of us have come to the place where our one cry is, Lord, do not draw upon me beyond my measure, do not put me into a position for which I am not fitted, do not involve me in responsibility for which I am not qualified!

And what is qualification, what is fitness? It is simply Christ.

The Measure of Christ

Well now, we come back to this wilderness, and you see everything was on that basis; nothing whatever was of man in that wilderness from God's side, nothing at all. Everything was forbidding from one standpoint. Take that tabernacle, the outer court with its curtain stretched right round, and so high; there is no getting through, and no looking over. It all says, Keep out! Everything says, If you come inside here, you die! Keep out! There is but one way in, and that is through sacrifice; and that is your death representatively. You come in here, and your life is taken. It is all so forbidding, from one standpoint.

And yet from the other standpoint, there is the representing of the people in the presence of God. But how could it be? Well, from the first word to the last, it is all Christ. The whole of that structure of the tabernacle came from heaven. Not one idea was allowed to come from man's mind. It was not left with man to produce one thought as to the manner of that tabernacle, or how it should be built; from start to finish, it came from heaven. That is the otherness of Christ. The ideas are God's, not ours. Though we may be the Lord's people, it is still not a case of our ideas, but God's. Not a single thought from us is allowed. The fellowship, the access, the communion—oh, you cannot come in there save on the ground of Christ. It is by sacrifice. That sacrifice is Christ. It is by priesthood. That priesthood is Christ. The very garments all speak of Christ. It is Christ, only Christ, and you cannot come in except as Christ, so to speak. You are only accepted in the Beloved. You

are never accepted in yourself, not even as the Lord's child.

And what of Service? "Let my people go that they may serve me", the Lord had said to Pharaoh (Ex. ix. 1). But what is the service in the wilderness? It is priestly service. The Levites represent the service of the Lord's people. Priests and Levites—what are they? Why, their very adornment, their very clothes, are all types speaking of Christ. Everything about these priests and Levites is symbolical, representative of Christ. So that service is Christ, and you and I are shut out, even as the Lord's people, shut out in our own natures. Everything is God's thought here. All access in God's thought is Christ. All service is Christ, and only as you and I learn Christ, put on Christ, walk in Christ, and live Christ, have we any place, and the measure in which that is so determines the measure of our value to the Lord, our usefulness to Him.

And for this present moment the increase of Christ in us is by that ruling out, putting aside, thrusting back of our own encroachments and impingements, even in the things of God, the pushing back by the Lord saying, I do not want you! That is how it seems. That is how we feel rebuffed so often. But

there is another interpretation. We are wanting to get in. The Lord says, No, there is no place here for you, keep out; this place is reserved for My Son; your appreciation of Him is the measure in which you come in here; your abiding in Him is the measure of your standing here; your being hidden in Him, covered by Him, is the measure of your acceptance!

And for the coming need the Lord is intensifying the process, taking us deeply and soundly into this in our experience. Presently, perhaps, we shall thank the Lord for it all. We have been able to meet a need which was too deep for anything ordinary to meet. If we had not been that deep way, we could not have met that deep need. If we had not known those bitter fires, we could not have served that Divine purpose. Whatever else the Lord is doing—and I am not saying this is the only thing He is doing—whatever else He is doing, He is doing this, and whether it be for this life here or for His Kingdom afterward, there is no doubt or question about the truth of this principle. For the kingdom now in this life spiritually, and for that kingdom which follows, the Lord must have at hand men and women of stature. May we find the grace to follow Him wholly.

T.A.-S.

"Blood" and "Fire"

The Secret of Power

Basic Passages

1. Blood.

- "When I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Ex. xii. 13).
- "The life of the flesh is in the blood" (Lev. xvii. 11).
- "Being . . . justified by his blood" (Rom. v. 9).
- "Having . . . boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus" (Heb. x. 19).
- "They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. xii. 11).

2. Fire.

- "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire" (Matt. iii. 11).
- "There appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire, and it sat upon each one of them" (Acts ii. 3).
- "I came to cast fire upon the earth; and what will I, if it is already kindled?" (Luke xii. 49).
- "A flame of fire in a bush" (Acts vii. 30).
- "Who maketh his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire" (Heb. i. 7).
- "There were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God" (Rev. iv. 5).

movement in the earth: firstly, the breaking out, in the social, national, and international spheres, upon the surface of life, of evil forces which, they had been well aware, had long been working underground, but so subtly hidden that people generally had been in complete ignorance of them. Secondly, a terrible lowering of the level of life in the Church, as represented by organised Christianity, with a corresponding powerlessness to bring a living message to men, to touch the breaking forth of evil, or even to deal with it in prayer before God. Indeed the decline in the prayer life of the churches has been one of the most alarming symptoms, indicating the true nature of the whole trouble.

As all this has been pondered and prayed-over, the cry has again and again broken forth—

"Revive Thy work, O God,
Disturb this sleep of death,
Quicken the smouldering embers, Lord,
By Thine Almighty Breath."

For these exercised souls in their praying and pleading have recognised that the state of the people of God was the key to the situation. Sometimes they prayed with hope in their hearts, sometimes with a keenness of desire which rose to the point of agony, sometimes almost in despair. It often seemed that their prayer met with no response. Things did not improve, but rather grew worse. The winds of God did not blow.

For many years now there has been a growing uneasiness and deep concern in the hearts of godly men as they have watched the development of a twofold

The slumbers of God's people grew more deathlike. The smouldering fires seemed to be going out altogether. The men who were bearing the burden on their hearts entered into the experience of the prophet Habakkuk, voiced in his great complaint, "O Lord, how long shall I cry and thou wilt not hear? I cry unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save." But all who have dealings with God learn that, though this often seems to be the case, it is not really so. No true prayer is lost. It comes into the ear of God and obtains answers which sometimes are unrecognised because they are so surprising. God moves in altogether unexpected ways. "By terrible things thou wilt answer us in righteousness, O God of our salvation" (Psa. lxxv. 5). When the Lord's intercessors "pray in the Holy Spirit" they release spiritual forces of a potency little understood. "Come, see the works of God: he is terrible in his doings toward the children of men" (Psa. lxxvi. 5).

The Malady of the Christian Church in the Light of Present-day Conditions

The world war of 1914/1918, together with the Russian Revolution of 1917, was a staggering revelation of the evil which had long lain concealed under the thin veneer of civilisation. But only comparatively few really understood. The twenty years which followed was a period of rapid deterioration both in the world and in the Church. Spiritual inertia and moral corruption made tremendous inroads on the life of the nations: witness the unreadiness of Britain to fulfil her responsibilities as a great world power, and the collapse of France. Then came the deluge, and the last three and a half years have been perhaps the most terrible in human history. Evil of a truly appalling character has been let loose in a torrent of amazing volume. It seemed as if nothing could withstand it as it swept on its course, arrogant, blasphemous, victorious. All that makes life tolerable to men reared in traditions of liberty was gravely threatened. It speedily became apparent that this was a spiritual issue, and statesmen who rarely touched the spiritual note, or spoke of God in relation to world affairs, began to refer to the situation as "Satanic" and as dominated by the Powers of Darkness. Men began dimly to understand what the Holy Scriptures mean by "the mystery of iniquity".

But what of the Christian Church? Did it arise in its pristine purity, put on its beautiful garments, and come forth against the evil forces? Did it look forth on the darkness of the night "as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, terrible as an army with banners?" (Song of Songs vi. 10). Alas, no! On the contrary she has been largely like Israel, when confronted by the Philistine host in the days of Saul. "It came to pass in the day of battle that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hands of any of the people" (I Sam. xiii. 22). Not altogether so, thank God. Here and there were companies of the Lord's intercessors who furbished their weapons, and, being good soldiers of Jesus Christ, stood fast in the evil day. But they were a painfully small minority. The

greater number did not know what their weapons were, still less how to use them. They were disturbed, bewildered, perplexed, but paralysed.

Now we are hearing voices from many directions asking questions, making suggestions, analysing the situation, and pointing out this, that, and the other thing that must be done. Many of these but add to the confusion. But here and there evidence is given of deep and terrible exercise of heart. Books are being written and widely read by thoughtful people, which make tremendous statements as to the nature of the malady in the Christian Church: and this by those who are in the organised system of church life, who love that in which they have been reared, and seek its good. Voices are speaking in prophetic strains. Here, for instance, is a statement culled from a book published in the Autumn of 1942, written by a loyal and devoted member of the Church of England, one who is giving his whole life to its service, and proposes to continue so doing because of his deep love for it.

"I believe that our Church is, in the main, a dead Church, that it cleaves to the security and comfort of its coherence with a corrupt order of society which is itself moribund...that it all too often preaches an emasculate pietism and shirks the fact that it has now no spiritual dynamic to offer to man; that it is in the main, a compromising pseudo-Christianity. Its professionalism, its mere "churchiness", sicken me, and the typical "parson" and his utterance and attitude fill me with despair. That is to underline the repulsion and, for this purpose, to discount the compensating beauty, holiness and devotion which the Church so evidently also contains. And I am assured that this repulsion is not an evil but a good repulsion. Finally, if I am honest with myself, I must confess that I do not see the first shoots, in this Church of England, of that resurrection of Christianity which I know to be at the birth...I believe that they who ally themselves with the Church of England ally themselves with death and go down in spirit to a grave of the spirit".

Faithful are the wounds of a friend! But it is a terrible indictment, even if it were only approximately true.

Or again, here is an extract from a book originally written in German by a Swiss author, first published in English in October 1942. It deals, not with any particular national or denominational Church, but with the situation generally. Drawing a radical distinction between what he calls "real Christians" and "Christianity" the author says—

"These real Christians would believe in a way which meant that they had staked everything, their life, their salvation, their souls, their trouble and their sorrow, and therefore the salvation, suffering, and future of the whole world—staked it unconditionally, unreservedly, unquestioningly, and with no trepidation—on Christ's resurrection, the victory of which...they simply believe".

"And Christianity? IS IT NOT A HINDRANCE TO CHRIST'S COMING? Is it not a rotten, out-moded, useless, even harmful thing? Must it not be abolished?...Christianity need not be abolished. If it continues as Christianity, the sort of Christianity—and we are its adherents—which remains steadfastly in unbelief, steadfastly desiring itself rather than God, and therefore steadfastly under God's curse, then we are doomed already; there is nothing left but annihilation. The world, and above all God, will trample us down, so that we should be already virtually abolished".

Now whatever may be thought of these utterances—and they are heart-shaking—they are surely symptomatic and point to something being gravely and terribly wrong. We may thank God that such voices are making themselves heard. Oh, that His people may not be dull of hearing.

The Two Great Marks of the Church of Christ

There can be no denial of the statement that there is a tremendous contrast between the Church as it is seen on earth to-day and the Church of the New Testament writings, especially of the Book of Acts. And if the thought is lifted from the Church as it existed in Apostolic days to the Holy Spirit's revelation of the Church as God intended, and still intends, it to be, the contrast is greater still. What are the two great marks of the Church of Christ according to Divine revelations? Are they not "Blood" and "Fire", with their concomitants of Sacrifice and

Suffering? The very strangeness of that statement and perhaps the shock which its reading gives are tokens of how far we have drifted, and how little we are accustomed to think God's thoughts after Him. The New Testament is saturated with these great spiritual realities. If the true meaning of these can be recovered, and a people found on earth, even a remnant, in the mighty value of them, we shall not lack power, and power adequate to face up to the forces of evil which are dominating the world to-day, both in the group of Axis nations and the opposing Allies.

Yes, Blood and Fire! When God raised up the late William Booth to proclaim the Gospel to the submerged masses of Darkest England, He led him to adopt those two words as his slogan. Anyone who had first-hand experience of the work done in those days knows that Blood and Fire were the dynamic of the whole movement. The work was saturated in prayer. Half nights were frequent and whole nights were sometimes set apart for waiting upon God.. The passion of God breathed through human hearts and consecrated lives. The passion in the prayer life of the people was such as almost to shake the buildings in which they were assembled. Is it to be wondered at that multitudes were converted?

Can it be that wrapped up in these two words is a great lost secret, the recovery of which would restore the Church to its purity and power? Let us seek to gather out from the Word what it teaches as to the meaning of the Precious Blood and the place of Fire in the life of the believer.

(To be continued)

S.A.

JULY 1945

The Unifying Effect of Thanksgiving

Whatever else may have motived the Apostle in writing his epistle to the Colossians, it is surely safe to assume that throughout it his continual burden for the saints, to which he refers in the opening verses of chapter two, would find expression as a heart-longing that could not be silenced. He "greatly strives" that their hearts may be comforted—not, surely, in the simple sense of comfort in bereavement, suffering, or other common trial, for this would scarcely be a matter of special conflict of spirit; but that they might know the comfort of "hearts knit together in love", that is, of true fellowship in Christ. Here indeed is matter for conflict, for in no realm more than this does Satan seek to work, weakening the saints by disunity through sowing among them the seeds of enmity, suspicion and coldness. Moreover, the very discovery of the deeper secrets of the mystery of God—a matter of great concern both to the saints and to the enemy—is bound up with this unity, as verse two declares; for is not the Spirit of the Lord hindered from His work of unveiling Christ where an atmosphere contrary to love prevails? Paul had good reason, and so have we, to strive greatly in prayer for the knitting of the saints together in love. Let us

follow through his epistle and note a vital principle which he commends as being potent to this end. It is found in his repeated references to thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving for What is of Christ in Others (Col. i, 3-5).

Paul's epistles almost invariably open with a note of praise for what he knows to be of Christ in those to whom he writes. He is by no means blind to their failings, and later in his writing he will deal suitably with them. But he looks first of all for the good, and not the evil, in other saints. Few of us are wholly victorious over the subtle temptation to reverse this order: we deceive ourselves by the thought that we are safeguarding the Lord's interests by being watchful against error, and so on, but in reality we are but indulging that trait of our fallen nature which seizes so readily upon that which is faulty. Should we not go further and say that the enemy himself is active in this, finding in our flesh a very easy prey and a willing ally in his mischievous work of sowing discord by means of questions and suspicions? Here is abundant occasion for resisting the Devil, and the method is simple. Begin to thank the Lord for what His grace has wrought in the lives of others, even though as yet

it be little, and we shall find ourselves not only on the watch for the marks of that grace in them, but also challenged by the inquiry "Is that grace in me in equal measure?" Such an attitude will inevitably drive us to humbling before God on our own account and to a greater esteem for our brethren. Let those who are most deeply taught in the things of the Lord and keenest in the discernment of error be more than all others watchful, lest they undervalue what Divine grace has already accomplished in other lives. Christ has triumphed in some measure in a life, and can He not do yet more? Yes, if a way be made for Him; and thanksgiving can do this. (Ps. L, 23 R.V.M.). Let us then seek to know the exercise of that love which covers a multitude of sins (1 Pet. iii, 8). Read again how God met Praying Hyde on this very matter (see pp. 136-140 of the Official Life edited by Capt. E. G. Carré), and let us seek grace to follow in the footsteps of one so greatly used of God. Surely it will be unto corresponding results.

Thanksgiving for the Inheritance in Christ (Col. i, 11-13).

These verses suggest trial, and bring to mind the words of Heb. xii concerning the chastening or "child-training" of God's sons. Would we rather the Father thus disciplined us through difficult experiences, that we might become partakers of His holiness; of the inheritance of the saints in light, or would we rather be permitted to take an easier path, devoid of trials, leaving us at the end saved from condemnation, but missing the glory to which we might have attained? No true heart could hesitate in its choice. What then shall we say concerning the demands for patience and longsuffering which the Father's training involves? Can we give thanks for them? "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." And how does this affect the unity of the saints? Listen when next you are gathered with others around the Lord's Table and worship is brought by one and another and laid as an offering at His feet. Note the brother whom you know to be passing through deep waters of suffering, and hear him offer his thanksgiving to the Lord for the love and grace of His dealings with His children. What is your reaction? Is it not an instant outgoing of your heart in sympathy and love toward your brother, and of deep gratitude and humbling before God for such a triumph of His grace? Your heart is knit to your brother's, and the bonds in Christ are strengthened. Here then is a ministry for the tried and afflicted saints. Being strengthened unto all patience and longsuffering with joy, let them abound in thanks unto the Father even in the midst of the fiery trial. And even if this be done in secret, where no other saint hears, the spiritual value of it is known in the realm of heavenly powers, and the testimony of it rings out to the confusion of the enemy, and he knows again that the triumphant saint has been delivered out of the authority of darkness and translated into the kingdom of the Son of God's love.

Thanksgiving for Security in Christ (Col. ii, 6).

The context of this verse relates to a condition of

danger and uncertainty because of deceitful error that is being taught, and in that it is very like the present day. How shall we walk at ease and liberty with such perils surrounding us? What are we to believe? Can we be sure of not being misled? What is the touchstone of a true teaching? Whom can we trust as our companions in the way? There is nothing so damaging to faith and fellowship as questions that suggest doubt and lack of confidence in God or in our brethren. In the midst of this atmosphere of doubt the Apostle addresses this exhortation to us: "As ye received Christ Jesus the Lord so walk in him, rooted...stablished...even as ye were taught, *abounding in thanksgiving.*" Giving thanks for what? For what you have been taught concerning Christ and His Cross. The errors that abound are "not after Christ" (v. 8); but you know the doctrine of Christ, that "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and in Him ye are made full" by way of the Cross. Here are sure guides to the truth. Does a teaching make everything of Christ, and nothing of fallen man? Does it acknowledge the necessity of the Cross for the entire putting away of the race in Adam? Does it confess that by the Cross our Lord took out of the way the law, the bond written in ordinances that was against us? Does it proclaim that by His death He destroyed him that had the power of death, triumphing over all the principalities and powers? (Col. ii, 9-15). If we are rooted in this ground, and stablished in this faith, we can dare to walk at liberty and unafraid—though with meekness and godly fear—in the midst of pitfalls and snares that engulf the unwary, and to sing as we go our song of thanksgiving to our Lord Who saved us. And shall we walk alone in such a way? If it happen that we find another walking in the same path shall we be critical of him and refuse his company because of some minor point of difference between us? Or, to change the figure, if we find ourselves with a handful of others in a lifeboat while many are perishing in the sea around us, shall we eye our companions suspiciously and keep ourselves aloof from them? Our common enjoyment of deliverance from destruction knits us together, and the keener our sense of the mercy shown to us the less shall we be disposed to quarrel with our fellow-partakers of salvation. To rejoice together in hope of the glory of God is a wonderful bond for believing hearts. Try the effect of it the next time the prayer meeting is heavy, or conversation with other saints seems lifeless. The adversary is put to flight by thanksgiving, the believer is more than ever rooted and stablished in the faith, the Body of Christ is enriched, and God is glorified. Adequate reasons indeed are these for "abounding in thanksgiving".

Thanksgiving for our Brethren in Christ (Col. iii, 15).

"The peace of Christ." This is a pregnant phrase. It suggests perfect serenity, an absence of any condition of inward strain or fret. And the preceding verses (12-14) suggest the way thereto. It is that of a right attitude of heart in the Lord towards others. Aloofness, offendedness, standing on our dignity, insistence

upon our so-called rights, judging our brethren, nursing grievances, these are fruitful causes of strain both in the individual consciousness and in our relationship to others. But where compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, forbearance and forgiveness reign—with love as the uniting principle—strain cannot linger and peace takes its place, "the peace of the Christ, to which ye were called in one body." And the Apostle then adds "*and be ye thankful*". Thankful for our fellow members in the one Body: thankful for our brethren, even the awkward ones, by whom we are given exercise in the wholesome lessons of patience and longsuffering. Our appreciation of our brethren would surely grow, and our hearts be knit more closely to them, if instead of murmuring at them we began to thank God for them, and for the Divine purpose of love which has caused their lives and ours to meet. Here is one of the deepest secrets of overcoming him who is ever ready to sow discord among brethren. Resist him with thanksgiving and he will be put to flight.

But the "one Body" means more than the simple fact that we are brethren. It involves our functioning together in the Lord. Why has He joined us to the particular brethren with whom our life is linked in His will? Because we and they together are to function on the principle of one body, i.e. of interdependence and co-operation. Each needs the other. "The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee". "If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing?" What one lacks another contributes. Where the one alone would act with an undue or inadequate emphasis, the others constitute a balancing factor and make for safety. We need one another, and only sorrow and disappointment can follow if we refuse to recognise our interdependence and to act accordingly. It is the Lord Himself Who has appointed each to his place, "dividing to each one severally as He will". If therefore we believe in the Lord's sovereignty, should we not thank Him for the brethren whom He has given to be our safeguard? Try the effect of such an exercise the next time you feel fretted by being tied to another brother in your ministry.

Thanksgiving because "in All Things" we Serve the Lord Christ (Col. iii, 17-24).

There is a whole world of blessing in that word "whatsoever" in verses 17 and 23. "Whatsoever...do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." Here surely is the secret of holy living, and we may well give thanks for it. Essay the doing of an ungracious thing or the speaking of an unkind word *in the name of the Lord Jesus*! It is an impossibility. Again, "Whatsoever...work heartily as unto the Lord, and not unto men." Here is the secret of contentment with our lot. To live "unto the Lord" is not the privileged calling of the few, but of all saints. It cannot be denied that, if judged by the usual standards of thought, the vocation of most of us is very prosaic, and far removed from what is commonly called "ministry". But are we debarred from therein serving the Lord? No: in

"whatsoever ye do...ye serve the Lord Christ". Let us then cease to despise the humble, the commonplace, the routine in life, and view it all as service rendered to Him. How will this affect our corporate life, the knitting of our hearts together in love? In a double way: it will remove the ground for pride or jealousy when one ministry might be deemed of greater honour than another; and it will deliver from the expectation of recognition or recompense from man. In most of us there is unhappily a lurking desire to be highly esteemed among men, to be applauded by them, to receive recompense in some form or other from them; and when such desire is disappointed there is often a real sense of grievance that tends to estrangement from our brethren and gives occasion to the adversary. Let us seal up this danger by recognising with thanksgiving that it is from the Lord and not from man that we shall receive the recompense: we serve the Lord Christ.

And yet again. "Be in subjection...obey...not as men-pleasers but...fearing the Lord". Here is the secret of ready subjection to others. Our position in life places us under the authority of others—of husbands, parents, masters. Is this irksome? Do these lord it over us harshly? Let us recognise that our subjection to these is in reality subjection to the Lord, and in un murmuring obedience to them is the proof of our glad submission to His will. Thus the bitter may become sweet.

Do we not well to give thanks to God the Father for such things as these? Begin to turn the wheel of thanksgiving, though it be at first in sheer faith unrelieved by any tinge of joy of soul, and see if the results do not give occasion for yet more thanksgiving and rob the enemy of otherwise useful occasion for dividing us from our brethren.

Thanksgiving for the Lord's Faithfulness (Col. iv, 2).
We need say little on this point. What is thanksgiving mingled with prayer but the expression of confidence in Him to Whom the prayer is addressed? Nothing so weakens and divides as doubt, fear, lack of assurance. Nothing so unites as confidence, a common faith, a certainty of outcome. They who pray together do well. They who offer the praise of faith do better. True faith looks not merely for the answer to the prayer but to the answerer, and knows that even though the response come not in the form desired or anticipated the prayer will not have failed, God having some better thing. "He abideth faithful". Let us be diligent therefore always to make known to God our requests *with thanksgiving*, and in so doing forge yet more strongly the links that bind us to our brethren of a like faith.

"And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set liers in wait against the children of Ammon, Moab and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten." (II Chron. xx, 22).

"Whoso offereth the sacrifice of thanksgiving glorifieth me, and prepareth a way that I may show him the salvation of God" (Psalm L. 23).

G.P.

Representation on the Basis of Identification

Identification and Human Relationships

This identification with Christ, and His coming in along that line, if we could see it, if our eyes were open—and I would that our eyes were opened to this—does set up a very real solemn and serious piece of business for the Lord's people in the matter of human relationships. How can I best pass this on to you and explain what I mean? You know, some of us have been to a number of different countries in this world, among other nations, and one of our greatest difficulties has often been the national character of the people to whom we were ministering. I need not mention different nations and their characteristics, but as you know, different nationalities do differ very much one from another in their constitution, their make-up. They seem to me to represent all the temperaments of humanity. Some are very emotional; others are intensely practical; others mental, in the right sense—I was going to say intellectual, but that is not quite the right word—living always in the realm of the mind. They must have the thing thoroughly threshed out in reason, and they keep you in that realm. Well, they differ, and our problem has often been this—Oh, we cannot get anywhere here at all, because here is this superficiality, or there is this intellectuality, this intense national disposition! And you might give it up if you accept that and work on that basis alone. But we have come to see that that whole thing has to be relegated to a secondary place and not be allowed to dominate at all. You see, Christ is other than all that, He is different from all that, He is of a peculiar disposition, make-up, constitution. The Holy Spirit is all powerful, and if the Holy Spirit can bring Christ in, introduce Christ into these lives, no matter how they are made, He has introduced that which is going quietly, deeply, surely to work to supersede and transcend all that other. Give Him time and you will find something there that is quite other than the natural disposition, altogether different from the natural make-up. It is something other, and that will hold on its way. That is Christ. Herein is the universality of the Holy Spirit.

Now that is exactly what happened on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem. There were representatives of all nations under heaven; Parthians, Elamites, dwellers in Mesopotamia, they were all there. That was strategy on the part of the Holy Spirit, and that day He came and so spake through the Apostles as to be understood by them all. That was the thing which amazed them. Here are we, all nations and languages under heaven, and yet as these men speak we hear them, every man in our own tongue wherein we were born, just as though it might be that it was but one language that was being spoken. The universality of Christ, the universality of the Holy Spirit! Just how it was done may not be clear, but there was

evidently a miraculous transcending by the Spirit of the curse of confounded speech among men. It sets forth a principle, that Christ simply ignores the differences of nationality and human make-up, and He is Himself one constituent, one basis, Who can come into all and constitute all one in the innermost reality, make all one. That is the meaning of those words which we have cited as one of our passages—"Have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him: where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all, and in all". The Holy Spirit can make of all nationalities, temperaments, constitutions, a oneness which is Christ, deeper than what we are in ourselves. We are all different. If we simply met and tried to proceed on a purely and merely human basis, well our differences would be clashing all the time and making immense difficulties. But if we will seek to relegate them to a secondary place and take account of the fact that, being members of Christ's Body, we all have something in common, and that it is that common something which is to be the basis of our relationship and our going on, which is to be cherished and safeguarded and looked after, then there will be a building up of the Body, and an increase of Christ; and that is the way of representation. Let us deliberately turn our backs on that attitude that says, I cannot get on with so-and-so, I give it up! and say, So-and-so is a child of God, there is something of Christ there and I am going to cling to that. That, beloved, makes for increase, and that too is the way of representation.

I know this, that when there is some real business for the Lord's children to do, if it is only two of them, husband and wife, or two in a place, some real matter which has to be dealt with corporately together, the enemy works upon all kinds of human conditions to paralyse that. He is out all the time, in advance very often, before we recognise the business that is going to arise, he is out working upon those human elements to get us across one another, to bring strain in relationship, to create phantoms in the mind about one another, and lies. And they seem so true! So-and-so said something and did you notice how they said it, and did you notice how they looked?—and you give an interpretation which has no truth in it! The enemy puts a construction; nothing is too small, too petty for him, and he is trying to get you across one another, a strain in relationships, because there is an issue. Presently you will be required to stand together on some matter, and you cannot; he has seen to that beforehand, by sowing seeds of destruction and discord. These are real things, they are not imaginations; they are the result of experience and observation.

(concluded on front page)

(continued from back page)

What I am saying is this, that we have to get on to the ground of Christ if Christ is to be expressed, and seek to keep off this ground of what is Jew and Greek, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, and so on. Have that ground where Christ is all, and in all, hold that ground, and then He comes in. Representation of Christ means identification with Christ, and that is the only identification that you and I will ever find here, unless it is identification with the Devil himself. There are only two alternatives, it seems to me.

I do trust you are not confused but are seeing glim-

mers of light, and that we shall recognise why we are here. We are here on this earth as the Lord's representative. But it is not that we are here or there and He far away; we are here to be the vessel in which He is, and He is here because we are here. That is to be the implication of our presence. Oh, that this might not just be a theory but more and more a fact, by reason of our living in the Spirit, that our presence may mean to all unseen intelligences, as well as men, Christ is here by His Spirit. The Lord grant it may be so.

T.A.-S.

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(If the Lord wills)

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Lord's Day, 11 a.m., 3.30 and 6.30 p.m.

Monday, 11 a.m., 3.30 and 6.30 p.m.

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SEPTEMBER—OCTOBER, 1944

NO. 5, VOL. 22

Editor's Letter

"Heathfield",
Kilcreggan,
Dumbartonshire,
Scotland,
July 1944.

"THY GOD REIGNETH"

BELOVED OF GOD,

The contents of this letter will doubtless come as a shock to many of our friends, especially to those who have had personal fellowship with us in London. But as you read on, while there may remain some questions and problems, perhaps light will filter through which will help. The news is that, during the new phase of things—the "flying bomb" attack on London—our Conference Centre—house and hall—has fallen to this destructive activity, and for residence and conferences is no more. The same applies to other adjoining premises which were used for accommodation.

There is a wonderful story of simply miraculous deliverances and preservations; for while quite a number of friends were in residence, not only was there not a single life lost, but only very superficial scratches were suffered. In the cases of Mr. and Mrs. Paterson and Mr. & Mrs. Foster the house was wrecked on top of them and the rooms in which they were in bed were demolished, yet they were unharmed. Not only so, but in the days following when we have had to face a situation of devastation which might well have made the stoutest heart sick, on my arrival on the scene I found everyone most triumphant, and all in a state of spiritual ascendancy. Through the days of working amidst the ruins to salvage all that was possible, we have been a "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing" company. This is no small testimony to the inworking of His mighty power.

It is too early yet to forecast anything, or to say what may be the Lord's meaning in this. For some time past the Lord has been increasing His emphasis among us upon the essentially spiritual nature of His work in this dispensation, and the necessity for heavenliness in our position, relationships, and character. Only on the Lord's Day prior to this happening we were led to speak of how heavenly vision led Abraham from the solid civilisation of Chaldea and kept him in a tent. This we do not interpret to mean that the Lord will never want and use temporal things to spiritual ends, but it is perfectly consistent with the position that we have always taken that the spiritual must always eclipse the material. We hold earthly things very lightly, and whether or not we are able to resume in a new Conference Centre in London, we are glad that with us there is such an extensive and strong spiritual ministry and testimony that we do not feel that the real values need be affected by such happenings as these. We were given the text at the head of this letter as the motto for this year, not knowing then what was before us, but it is now coming into its own, and it is *true!*

We have to see in His time what the Lord's major thought is in allowing what has happened. Through four years, and at times when destruction approached to within a few yards, the whole place has been marvellously preserved. But now His time has come for a suspension of activities there. It may mean that He desires a change in form or location. It may be unto expansion; or it may be something quite unimagined; but of this we are sure, it will prove to be the working of the law of the grain of wheat; life out of death; gain out of loss. It will be increase in some most essential form. So we wait and watch.

Some practical points immediately arise ; others will appear as time brings new situations. In the meantime,

1. Conferences at that Centre will be suspended indefinitely.
2. All communications should be addressed to me at Kilcreggan (as above).
3. Patience will be shown by our friends if any delays occur. (All the literature and printing-room equipment is safe, and it is only a matter of transferring the former, with office equipment, and may be necessary).
4. The local assembly will continue to meet in the basement of the old " Centre ".

There is nothing definite upon which to build such expectation at present, but it may very well be that the Lord is purposing to have the coming Winter months occupied with wider ministry, rather than centralised or localised ; and who knows but that it might be *very* wide, to the countries abroad which are a continuous burden upon our hearts ? During the War years while travelling abroad has been impossible, there has been a very real preparation in various ways for such ministry, and many in various countries have come to reach out strongly for the ministry with which the Lord has entrusted us. There is no doubt that a very deep movement is taking place in many hearts and many places, with a growing consciousness that the general Christian system, and very largely, the evangelical bodies have not the spiritual food that is necessary to real spiritual maturity. Reality and fulness are becoming a growing demand, and we know of very many who are deeply disappointed with the " measure " that is in the churches and organisations. " Revival " in the sense in which that idea is generally held is not the need, but a return to, or recovery of, the true revelation of God's order, method, and purpose.

You will be praying over all this, and for us at this time, that we may see the way of His meaning in " the things which have happened ".

Yours in the fellowship of His Son,
T. AUSTIN-SPARKS

The Representation of the Invisible God

No. 3

Representation by the Holy Spirit

READING : Luke xxiv. 46-49 ; John xx. 21-23 ; Acts i. 8.

Continuing our occupation with the matter of the great Divine thought of representation, we shall now be especially concerned with one simple emphasis on the place of the Holy Spirit in this connection.

In our previous meditations we were seeing this Divine thought as revealed in the Scriptures ; firstly, God making man in His own image, after His own likeness ; and then the thought taken up in fulness in Christ, Who is repeatedly declared to be the image of the invisible God ; and finally the thought carried over into the Church, the elect, which is to be conformed to the image of His Son, all speaking so clearly of this intention of God to be represented, to be known by representation.

Christ's Representative Work by the Spirit

Now, the Holy Spirit has a very vital place in this whole matter. When the Lord Jesus officially took up this particular phase or function of His life and work, you know it was then that the Holy Spirit came specifically into evidence in His life and ministry. It is true that He was begotten of the Holy Ghost, it is true that He was very God, but in the official work for which He came into this world, the work of the Son of Man, which is a representative term or title, He stands to represent man, the race. Luke's Gospel,

as you know, is particularly and peculiarly the Gospel for the race, as Matthew is that for the Jew, and Luke's particular title for Christ is the Son of Man, representative. He takes the place of man as God intended man to be, to bring man in His own Person inclusively to the Divinely appointed destiny. He, the inclusive Man, will advance by all the stages of man's course to that Divinely appointed end, and eventually, glorified, exalted even at God's right hand, He will stand as inclusively representative of that new race, that new creation. I say that, as Son of Man, He will advance by all the stages of man's progress toward that glorious destiny ; for He will be there as the first-fruits, the firstborn among many brethren. That very phrase is linked with this thought of representation. He " is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation " (Col. i. 15) ; representative, firstborn. Just as the first-fruits of the harvest were representative of the whole harvest, and the farmer would take the first-fruits and offer them to God in token of the whole harvest which would follow, so Christ was the first-fruits of all creation, and the firstborn among many brethren, and He occupies that position at God's right hand now representatively, the token of all to follow. But from the very first step, through every stage of that course to the glory, His way is by the Spirit.

The Cross the First Step

In a sense, a very real and true sense, the Jordan was the first step toward the glory. The Cross is always the first step to glory; there will be no glory if there is no Cross, and the measure of glory will be the measure of the Cross. We will leave that and come back to it again presently. The Jordan was the first step toward that glorifying, not of Christ alone and merely in a personal way, but the glorifying of man, the many sons to be brought to glory by Him, the whole harvest to be brought to glory by Him, the many brethren who come by Him. I say, in a very real sense the Jordan was the first step toward that glory, and in the Jordan, as we have already pointed out, the governing idea is representation. A race which cannot be glorified must be put out of the way, to make room for a race which can be glorified. A mankind which can never come to glory must be put away from occupying the ground of a man that can come to glory. So, representatively in the Jordan in His baptism, His death and burial in type, He takes the place of a race, a mankind, which can never be glorified, and it is got out of the way in Him representatively.

In the reality of the Cross, of which the Jordan was the type, we have that blessed accomplishment. All this that can never be glorified, never come to glory in us, has been put away. Are you worried, obsessed and troubled with all that about you which can never be glorified? Well, if you have accepted Christ as your representative, and have stood right into His representative work for you, everything that will hinder your coming to glory has been dismissed, every bit of it; and God is working on that ground with us. The last phase of that work will have to do with our bodies of death; they shall be changed, and made like unto the body of His glory. We are coming in every part of our redeemed being to glory, because what cannot be glorified has been representatively got out of the way. That is, of course, the ground for our faith.

In His coming up out of the Jordan, type of His coming up from the grave, He occupies the representative position of a man who can be glorified, a mankind that can be glorified, a race that can come to glory, and at a certain point in His life these two things were brought together in one hour. In the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah spoke with Him of the death, or exodus, which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem, and in that same hour He was glorified. The death and the glory came together in one hour in Him. That is how it can be with Him because He so perfectly represents God's thought. It is representation.

But then this new creation, this new man capable of coming to glory, of being glorified, this new race as gathered up into Him as its Head, as its first-fruits, as its first-born, can never come to glory, only as from that very point of standing on the new creation ground, resurrection ground. The Holy Spirit takes charge; and so, coming up out of the water, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit as in the

semblance of a dove came and rested upon Him. That is the first thing. The Holy Spirit takes charge, so to speak, of this whole matter of bringing to glory, of perfecting this new creation for glory. It is the Holy Spirit's work from beginning to end.

What was true in the case of the Lord Jesus as the Head has to be true in the case of the whole Body, and Pentecost must be the counterpart of the resurrection side of Jordan, where the Body, brought on to resurrection ground, is taken charge of by the Holy Spirit, to be brought right through all the course and stages of perfecting unto glory. There is a little phrase in Peter's writings about "the Spirit of glory resting upon you" (I Pet. iv. 14).

So our emphasis is there, that this is the object of the Holy Spirit, this is the necessity for the Holy Spirit; for nothing is possible of all this Divine thought apart from the Holy Spirit.

The Father's Attestation of the Son

But there is a second part, another side or aspect of this. The Spirit certainly comes, the anointing takes place, but upon the anointing, the Divine voice is heard from heaven saying "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. iii. 17). With the anointing there comes the attestation. God is calling attention to this One, is indicating this One, is pointing out this One, and in effect He is saying, This is My representative! You know that on the Mount of Transfiguration, when Peter in his impulsiveness would be found dictating, advising, suggesting what should be done, the voice, that same voice, came again: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him"; referring everything to Him for government, for direction, for dictating. "Hear ye him." It is the voice of attestation from heaven at Jordan and on the Mount, singling Him out as God's representative. It is representation again.

Now those two things go together. They are only two aspects of one thing, because the anointing means that God Himself has committed Himself to this One. That is the meaning of the anointing. As we were saying in our previous meditation, where the anointing is you have to meet and deal with God. "He reproveth kings for their sakes, saying, Touch not mine anointed ones, and do my prophets no harm" (I Chron. xvi. 21-22). It is to meet God if we do touch the anointing or that upon which the anointing rests, or those who are anointed. God has committed Himself in that anointing. Therefore if God is there committed, involved, wrapped up with that, that is God's representative, and that is as God functioning there. The Holy Spirit has constituted that vessel of representation by His coming and His presence; God is present. That means that all the rights of Divine sovereignty have been taken up by the Holy Spirit and brought into the midst of that which is anointed, that which is indwelt by the Spirit. All the rights of Divine sovereignty are in the Holy Spirit, and if He is present, He is present in all the rights of Divine sovereignty.

I do want you to be able to grasp this, because I feel it is tremendously important for us as members of this Body of Christ, indwelt by the Holy Spirit. We just very faintly touched upon this matter yesterday, and I feel there is something more to be said about it.

The Sovereignty of the Holy Spirit

When this counterpart of Jordan, death and resurrection and the open heaven and the descent of the Spirit and the anointing, when the counterpart of that took place on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came in terms of Divine sovereignty to be present, and it is a thing which you and I have to recognise, to which we have to bow the knee absolutely. It may be that we have not recognised sufficiently that receiving the Holy Spirit of anointing means that the sovereignty in our lives is taken right out of our hands. Have you asked for the Holy Spirit? Have you prayed to be filled with the Spirit? Have you recognised the tremendous importance of the Holy Spirit indwelling? If you have not, then, of course, that will account for all kinds of weaknesses, failures, slowness of growth, powerlessness in service, ineffectiveness in life, and a host of other things. But if you have seen the tremendous importance of the Holy Spirit's presence in power, in fulness in the life—and I do trust that you have—then, having sought the Spirit, you have consciously or unconsciously, intentionally or unintentionally, invited that the whole sovereignty of your life shall be taken out of your own hands, and that it should be entirely transferred to another; and that involves you in far more than you have any idea of. This is the point we were trying to make yesterday.

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came in terms of sovereignty, and took hold. He took right hold in terms of sovereignty and, in doing so, He made men say things the import of which they accepted within the compass of their own understanding, it is true. Yes, they were not opposed to those things which they were saying, so far as they understood them, but the things which they were saying, while they agreed with them, only went to the range of their appreciation, their understanding of them. But the Holy Spirit meant infinitely more than that, and before long these very men who agreed up to the point of their understanding and appreciation of the things they were saying, were confronted with the fact that the things they said committed them to a great deal more than they had understood. And that is the practical issue of the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit.

Peter quite agreed, according to his understanding, the range of his appreciation, with what the Lord had said about "unto the uttermost part of the earth". He quite agreed with what he was saying—"... to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts ii. 39). But it will not be many days before Peter will stumble right up against it, the very thing he himself has said, and find it meant far more than he intended it to mean, when it comes to Caesarea and a Gentile house. "All that are

afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call"! Peter says, Not so, Lord; and there is a battle. But you notice that the Holy Spirit, when He gets Peter through, comes right down on that situation in a mighty way. It is a matter of which the Holy Spirit has charge, and the verdict, the conclusion of the whole matter is Peter's report at Jerusalem—"Who was I, that I could withstand God?" "If God gave unto them the like gift as he did also unto us... who was I, that I could withstand God?" (Acts xi. 17). There is a man having to go down before the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit. He has been committed to that from the beginning.

Now, what do we want to get at in this matter? It is this: if you and I really do come to the place where the Holy Spirit as Lord becomes resident in us, we are confronted with this great law of the absolute sovereignty of the Holy Spirit to do as He likes with us and to take us completely beyond our own intentions, right beyond our own prejudices, our own traditions, all our past history, take us beyond our present mental range of what we now conceive to be the right and the wrong. We have all got a fixed mental horizon to-day. At this moment we would all put a certain limit and bound and hedge to what we consider is right and wrong, what we ought to do and what we ought not to do. We move within our own mental interpretation of things, and that is our range. Are we going to bind the Holy Spirit to that? If so, we will never go on to God's ultimate purpose and end. What we shall find is that the Holy Spirit will demand from time to time that we get rid of our hedges, and let Him lead us sheer out of our own fixed bounds of acceptance and interpretation. He will demand that, that is His sovereign right, and our progress towards God's final end, and, mark you, the measure in which we can truly be representative for God here, depends entirely upon that capacity for adjustment to a new revelation or indication by the Holy Spirit, our capacity, our amenability to adjustment to what the Spirit will show us.

It seems to me that very often the Lord hedges our lives up to an emergency, a crisis, a disputed position, in order to bring about something new. The fact is, of course, we will not move into anything more of the Lord unless we are compelled to. That is how it works out, and however good and however great and however precious may have been the Lord's dealings with us, showings to us, impartations to us, the best that He has ever given to us will have to be brought to the place where it no longer meets our fullest need, in order that we should move on to something more. That is the way of progress. We have had, perhaps, wonderful revelations, wonderful dealings of the Lord with us; things have happened in our lives which have eclipsed all that ever preceded them, and at the time we have felt that we have reached the fulness. We have not; there is something beyond this. Just at the time this is as far as it is possible to go, but our experience and our history is that those things which at the time and for a time were so great, so wonderful, so all-absorbing, have come to be as though they were

not, with a growing sense of new need, new demand, and another crisis has arisen in which we have had to know something more than has ever been. And the Lord forces situations like that. It is the way of enlargement, it is the way of growth. It seems to me to be His only practical way of keeping us going on. But it is the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit bringing about those crises and making these demands; and I suppose that will be our experience right to the end. If we really are under the government of the Holy Spirit, we will never have reached finality here, there

is still more beyond; but to reach it we have to lose contentment with what we have. One of the tragic features of Christianity is the measure of contentedness with that evangelical Christianity. The great need to-day is a sense of need everywhere, amongst Christians and in the world, a desperate sense of need. The Church will never grow until it grows by this intense sense of need of something more. Men will never come to Christ until they have a real sense of need.

(To be continued)

T. A-S.

“Blood” and “Fire”

The Secret of Power (continued)

The Meaning and Value of the Blood of Christ

One of the saddest features of modern preaching is that, in the great majority of instances, the sermons are bloodless; they are not founded upon the atoning sacrifice of Christ on Calvary. To hear many a preacher to-day, you would never gather that God had, at the cost of infinite suffering to His own heart, in the Person of His Son, paid a price of incalculable worth for man's redemption; that He Who was "God, manifest in flesh", was also "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world". If the Cross is referred to at all—and in numberless instances it is entirely ignored—the death of Jesus is spoken of as a martyr's death, not as a sacrifice for sin, by which "God can be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus". This is the unalterable foundation of the Gospel and there is no salvation for man apart from it. The touchstone by which all preaching must be judged is its attitude to the Cross, and the precious Blood shed thereon. Out of ninety-nine references to blood in the New Testament, forty relate directly to the Blood of Jesus. It is the heart and centre of the Glad Tidings. Wherever, in any part of the earth, the Gospel is proclaimed in its original purity, the Blood of Jesus is given its true place, and it proves to be the power of God unto salvation. God still honours His Word given as a type to Israel in Egypt, "When I see the blood I will pass over you".

The significance of blood is found in the fact, so often overlooked, that "the life of the flesh is in the blood". For that reason God's ancient people Israel were forbidden to partake of blood in any form, and the sorest judgment followed the breaking of the commandment. "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh atonement by reason of the life" (Lev. xvii, 11). The modernist rejects blood upon the altar, but accepts it as an article of diet. The result is certainly his spiritual undoing. When the Blood of Jesus is mentioned, what is really involved is His infinitely valuable Life poured out in sacrifice. To realise the

value of that Blood it is necessary to know Who Jesus is, for the efficacy of the sacrifice is entirely dependent upon the value of the life laid down. Here we touch that which transcends all human understanding, for who can tell the value of the Life of Him Who was God manifest in flesh?

This great and gracious fact is the basis of the believer's assurance. We are justified by HIS Blood. While the Blood shed is the ground of our justification, faith in Himself is that which brings assurance and peace. But it is ever faith in Him as the crucified and risen One. And assurance is greatly strengthened as the believer learns with joy that the Blood shed on the Cross has been carried through into the very presence of the glory of God, and sprinkled before the Throne of Grace, thus testifying that it has met all the requirements of Divine righteousness. A further fact to be apprehended is that the Blood has also been sprinkled upon the believer, thus bringing all its virtue and cleansing efficacy into the life of the trusting soul. We have "come to the blood of sprinkling" (Heb. xii. 24). Our hearts are "sprinkled from an evil conscience" (Heb. x. 22).

In the Mosaic economy, which is throughout a type and shadow of the spiritual realities of redemption, the High Priest, on the Day of Atonement, entered into the Holiest of all with the blood of the sin offering, sprinkling it upon and before the Mercy-seat. Seven times was the blood thus sprinkled before that place where the Shekinah Glory was manifested, between the cherubim. This sevenfold sprinkling is a revelation, in picture form, of the fact that when our Lord Jesus entered into "heaven itself" (Heb. ix. 24) "through his own blood...having obtained eternal redemption" (Heb. ix. 12) all the mighty values of the Blood, i.e. the Life of Jesus poured out in sacrifice, are had in remembrance, and operate efficaciously in the very presence of God. That sprinkling is an unalterable fact, it can never be cancelled; it was done "once for all" (Heb. ix. 12). The believer has no other ground of acceptance with God, nor is any needed. It is impossible to add

to perfection. The precious Blood is all-sufficient. Being "justified in his blood", we can have absolute assurance of our acceptance in the Beloved One.

It is precisely on the same ground that we have boldness to enter into the Holiest. What a privilege to come into the immediate presence of God! For an Israelite to have passed within the veil of the tabernacle would have meant instant death. We not only may come, but are exhorted so to do. "Let us draw near". It is our right. The presence of God is our home. The way is through "his flesh": the thorn-crowned brow, the nail-pierced hands and feet, the wounded side of the suffering Saviour. No soul of man can find acceptance with God, or dwell in the place of the everlasting burnings, except by reason of "the precious blood of Christ", a Lamb without blemish and without spot. The ripest saint has no other claim: the youngest child in the Father's family has the same standing. There is no difference.

"I want no other argument,
I seek no other plea,
It is enough that Jesus died,
And that He died for me".

The Blood of Christ the Ground of Overcoming the Accuser

There is another vital fact in relation to the Blood of the Lord Jesus which the believer must ever keep in view. It is the complete answer to all the accusations of Satan. The recognition of this puts a weapon into the hands of the child of God by which he overcomes. "They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb". The Adversary is the persistent accuser of the brethren. He works in a twofold way. First he accuses us "before our God day and night" (Rev. xii. 10). Our shortcomings, our failures, our transgressions are perseveringly presented before God. The stream of accusation never ceases. The Adversary sees to it that God is reminded of every fact that could tell against us. Every bit of unholiness is detailed before the Holy Throne. He also seeks to bring us under a sense of condemnation by accusing us in our own hearts. So many of the Lord's people, being only too conscious of their shortcomings, listen to his suggestions and are robbed of their joy. Many hours of sleeplessness are embittered because of the whispering of his suggestions that the Lord is against us, because of some action which has displeased Him. Or he will accuse us of missing opportunities of testimony, and so failing the Lord. There is no end to his subtleties along this line. He knows where we are weak, and where to direct his fiery darts. Oh how he lashes the soul! What agony he inflicts! We pray against him, but find no relief. God seems to have hidden His face and we cannot lay hold of Him. But whether

the Accuser is defaming us in the presence of God or torturing us in our hearts directly, the answer, all-sufficient, is the atoning Blood. Plead that Blood and the enemy has no reply. Hide in the wounds of Jesus and the accusing voice is silenced. Dwell on Calvary's mountain and your conscience is cleansed. The Blood avails, always.—Oh soul, troubled and tortured, robbed of your heritage of peace, learn to use the Blood as a weapon. Say to the Adversary, 'Yes, all that, and more is true, but the Blood of Jesus my Saviour, shed on the Cross, has been sprinkled before the Mercy-seat and on my guilty heart, and it avails! Your accusations cannot touch me. It is the Blood that maketh atonement for the soul'. The Devil hates the Blood and flees before it always. Give your testimony boldly and confidently, but always with humility, to the virtue of the Blood and you are conqueror in the fight. "They overcame him", not only "because of the Blood of the Lamb", but also "because of the word of their testimony". Therefore speak the word of testimony to the Blood when you feel least like it, for "we walk by faith". The assertion of faith, apart from feelings, will bring deliverance when it is faith in HIS BLOOD.

Thus we see the vast importance of the precious Blood: whether it be for justification from sin, enjoyment of the presence of God, or the hurling back of the accusations of the enemy, the Blood of Jesus is all-important. No wonder the Devil opposes the doctrine of the Blood and seeks to obliterate it from the preaching of the Gospel. It is the foundation truth of Redemption. "If the foundation be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" But "the foundation of God standeth sure". The Devil cannot destroy the Blood, but he can and does prevent multitudes knowing the way of life. He blinds and misleads the minds of those who do not place implicit faith in the Word of God. If the Christian Church wishes to recover its ancient power in testimony, and once again see the Gospel winning its triumphs, it must rediscover, and proclaim in trumpet tones, the meaning of the Blood of the Cross. Calvary is the only dynamic for the salvation of men, but it is all-powerful. The Gospel is the story of the pouring out of the life-stream of the Saviour on the Cross, so that men may live by Him.

"E'er since by faith I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die".

The Church is, first and foremost, a Blood-sprinkled people; they bear the marks of Calvary. This is one of the chief distinguishing features.

S. A.

"The one element that gives the blood its value is the holy obedience of which its outpouring was the proof; the blood of Christ Who offered Himself without spot to God... The other element is that the Holy Spirit was in the life of that blood. It was through the Eternal Spirit He offered Himself."

(Dr. Andrew Murray in "The Cross of Christ").

A Double Emphasis in the Acts of the Apostles

" For He Who wrought in Peter...wrought also in me "
(Gal. ii. 8).

The book of the Acts is largely concerned with two men, Peter and Paul. Their ministries were complementary, so that there is a certain sequence in the story as the emphasis passes on from Peter to Paul in the course of the development of the Spirit's work in the Church. Apart from this, however, there are striking features common to both; experiences which display spiritual principles as true in Paul's case as in Peter's, and equally true throughout the dispensation, whenever the Holy Spirit is given His proper place. Since "He who wrought in Peter" wrought also in Paul we are not surprised to find notable parallels in the two lives. The incidents are so unusual and the repetition of them so noteworthy that it may be helpful to consider a few of them with their spiritual interpretation.

I. SPIRITUAL STANDING AND WALK

(Acts iii. 1-10 and Acts xiv. 8-10)

It is surely no coincidence that the first recorded miracle of healing in each case was concerned with a lame man. Both the men concerned had been lame from birth; they never had walked. Doubtless the miracle was a sign, and a sign doubly confirmed by its repetition. The man who constitutionally has neither standing nor ability to walk can be made to stand on his feet and to go forward, walking and leaping and praising God.

This provision of a new vital energy is God's answer, through His people, to conscious and confessed need. The Church does not exist to carry spiritual cripples around, but to put them on their own feet in the Lord; not to add its mite of compassionate help, but to remove the cause of infirmity, by the authority of the name of the Lord Jesus. This is the gift which we have to give; an altogether new, living power. When men realise their natural condition as an inability to stand without support or to move alone, ours is the task, in the name of Jesus Christ, to bid them " Rise up and walk ". This, then, is a fundamental feature of a truly spiritual ministry, namely, the communication of power and ability to helpless cripples.

II. ABSOLUTE OBEDIENCE

(Acts x. 9-18 and Acts xxii. 17-21)

Both of the apostles fell into a trance whilst at prayer, and a similar issue arose in each case. Peter was a Spirit-filled man. He had accepted the absolute Lordship of Christ without reserve. He had yielded up his own will to the will of God. Yet, in spite of all this, he was found in conflict with the Lord as to his sphere of ministry. For him the matter was very acute, for it involved a renunciation of his whole position with regard to Divine things. He had no intention of departing from the Lord's way in wilful disobedience, but his fault lay in holding fast to his

own ideas as to what God ought to do. All his natural inclinations, all his past traditions, all that he had tenaciously held to be Scriptural, all the goodwill of his fellow Jews, everything said " Not so " to God's command. Nevertheless, deeper than all natural considerations, there was the voice of the Spirit in Peter, qualifying his refusal with the word " Lord ". And so the conflict raged in Peter's soul, whilst tremendous issues for the whole dispensation hung precariously in the balance.

It is always like this. Paul himself narrated his own experience of this same matter. He, too, had decided opinions and preferences as to his sphere of ministry. Like Peter, he had excellent arguments to present to the Lord in justification of his position. But good intentions and sincere arguments can be as great a hindrance to the Lord as flagrant disobedience. Yet Paul was a Spirit-filled man, who had yielded his whole life to Christ. The truth is that, while his original consecration formed the basis of his life, it did not mean that there would never arise another clash of wills between himself and his Lord. His soul aflame in intense desire to witness for Christ in Jerusalem, he hotly disputed with the Lord, urging his claims to serve in this way. " Make haste, and get thee quickly out... " said the voice from heaven; but Paul was not willing to yield and pressed his own earnest convictions that it was best for him to stay and witness in Jerusalem. In effect he, too, was saying, " Lord, not so ". The answer was peremptory, admitting of no further discussion: " Depart! I will send thee far hence... "

We are altogether mistaken if we imagine that the fulness of the Holy Spirit will mean that we shall always desire and do the Lord's will automatically. Unfortunately some take for granted that all their ideas as to the Lord's work must be right because they have sincerely yielded all to Him. True obedience of the Spirit means something far deeper than that. It means that our wisest and most devoted plans must be set aside when the Lord makes His will known. This is no light thing. It was a costly step for Peter to go to Caesarea; and it was a heart-breaking disappointment to Paul not to be allowed to work among the Jews. But though they both argued, they both obeyed. This, then, is the law of life in the Spirit, asserted and confirmed in this double experience, that there is but one mind and one will, the mind and will of Christ. The whole world has reason to thank God that Paul surrendered to the Spirit, and was sent " far hence to the Gentiles ".

III. UNCONSCIOUS MINISTRY

(Acts v. 15 and Acts xix. 11-12)

A further remarkable experience which both the apostles had is set forth in the above verses, which describe " special miracles " wrought through them. In Peter's case the sick were healed by the influence of his shadow as he passed them in the street; in

that of Paul the means were handkerchiefs and aprons which he had used. The implication is the same in both cases, namely, that quite apart from their conscious labours there was a beneficent influence ministered through them, altogether without any effort on their part. So it had been with the Master. To touch but the hem of His garment was to receive a stream of virtue and healing. The Church is here on earth to continue Christ's ministry, and it is therefore fitting that a similar truth should obtain in our case; and as we walk in the Spirit it does. Peter may feel that his day has been void of incident, but, all unknown to himself, he has left behind grateful souls who thank God that he ever passed their way. Paul may be conscious only of the sweat and tears of his labours, but the handkerchief which wipes his weary brow and the apron which serves in his daily toil are emissaries of life and healing to needy ones whom he never sees.

There is a service which is deliberate and conscious: there is also a ministry of Christ which flows spontaneously from lives which are truly spiritual, without those concerned realising what is happening. Peter kept in the sunshine, he walked in the light, and his shadow cast its healing power on others. Let the Church walk in the light of the Sun of Righteousness, and the same will be true. Paul toiled on in lowly and sacrificial service, seeking in all things to serve the Lord Christ, and from the symbols of his labours—handkerchiefs and aprons—the needy found health and blessing. He Who wrought in Peter wrought also in Paul, and thus signified that He is willing to work through us also. Every life lived truly in the Spirit sends forth, all unawares, a fragrant, health-giving ministry of Christ.

IV. DEATH ANNULLED

(Acts ix. 36-43 and Acts xx. 7-12)

A further striking parallel in the case of Peter and Paul is that each is said to have restored life to a dead person. Doubtless much is left unrecorded of the activities of the two apostles, but that only makes more impressive the fact that the Spirit has chosen the particular incidents which are described.

The spiritual message relates to death breaking into an order of things which is glorifying God, thus threatening to eclipse the glory. These two cases speak to us not of the dead condition of the unsaved, but of spiritual deadness overtaking the people of God. It is useless to postulate that spiritual death ought never to invade the House of God; as useless as it would have been to blame Eutychus for falling from the window. The fact is that such attacks of death do occur. The apostles did not waste time in vain lamentations, but were able, by the power of the Risen Christ, to face and overcome the dark invader. Well-meaning saints at Joppa mourned the untimely cessation of a valuable ministry, displaying the garments which Dorcas had made, in sad confession that her "good works" had now become a matter of past history. How often does a work of God come thus to an untimely end! How often does spiritual death break in upon a work of God which ought to go on;

in a meeting; in an individual life; or in a company of Christians. Most of us have nothing better to contribute than the widows of Joppa. We accept death. We think wistfully of what has been, and weep that it can be no more. Peter had something better to offer. He stepped in, in the name of the Lord, to say that the work must go on; Tabitha must arise from her sleep of death and continue her works of mercy.

In Paul's case the scene was Troas, and death's interruption did not relate to a work of God, but to fellowship. The saints were gathered together around the Lord's Table, rejoicing in the fellowship and ministry of the apostolic band, when a deep shadow was cast over everything, and blessed rejoicing gave place to trouble and sorrow. There was a breach in their fellowship. Eutychus had fallen to his death. It seems incredible that God should allow such a catastrophe to arise at the most sacred testimony to the love and life of His people, yet in a spiritual way this is a common happening. In a sense it may be inevitable, and only becomes tragic when there is no Paul to step forward and restore the broken circle. Instead of the meeting breaking up in an atmosphere of gloom and loss, they gathered around the Table, a united company, "not a little comforted". Death will attack fellowship: nothing can prevent it. The Church, however, has authority, by the same Spirit Who dwelt in Paul, to banish it and to restore joyful unity.

Unbelief says, "Tabitha is dead, the work of God is finished": faith says, "Tabitha arise!...and let the work of God continue". Spiritual weakness says, "Eutychus has fallen to his death; fellowship and unity are destroyed": the Spirit of Life answers, "His life is in him"—let us rejoice together at the feast of love".

V. RESURRECTION LIFE IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

(Acts xii. 1-17 and Acts xiv. 19-20)

We close with a further experience which both the apostles passed through, which was a personal deliverance from the power of death, made possible by fellowship in the Body of Christ. Peter was delivered over to death, but the Church gathered around him in earnest intercession, and as a consequence the chains fell off, the iron gate opened of its own accord, and he was led out into liberty. Paul was stoned and left for dead. In his case the saints literally gathered around him, and as they did so the apostle arose, triumphant over death, and returned to the city.

Peter's was no ordinary imprisonment. He was in the condemned cell, with the hour of execution fixed. He had been "delivered over to death". Nevertheless he did not die. He was liberated into a new personal testimony to the Risen Christ. Paul had the sentence of death in himself; smitten down and crushed, he held no further hope of life or ministry. But God, Who raiseth the dead, raised him up, to bear in his own body the glorious testimony to Resurrection Life. It was not the indomitable will of the man but the victorious power of Christ which set him on his feet in the midst of the wondering disciples.

There is a twofold spiritual principle set forth in these experiences. The first part is that spiritual ministry is on the basis of resurrection. The servant of God is as good as dead in himself, being altogether without any resource of life or strength on which to draw. Either God must provide a new life-energy for its continuance, or else his service is finished for ever. An utter death is necessary to provide the Lord with a basis for making him the embodiment of the message of Christ's triumphant life.

The second part is that fellowship in the Body of Christ is essential for such a manifestation of the Risen Life of the Head. Peter did not pray himself out of

prison; he is not described as making efforts to regain his liberty, but rather as being in a deep sleep. He was released in answer to the prayer of the Church. Paul was not able to hold on to the Lord in prayer, for he lay unconscious on the ground. He could not exercise faith at that moment, but he was surrounded by faithful fellow-members of the One Body, and so entered into a new experience of quickening from the dead.

In the light of these examples can we too affirm that "He Who wrought in Peter...(and in Paul)... wrought also in me"?

H. F.

The Church, the Cross, and the Conflict

No. 2 (continued)

The Church according to God's Thought

The Cross Removes the Curse of Babel

May I just say a word or two more before we close? The Cross removes the curse of Babel. What is Babel, or Babylon, which is the full-grown Babel? Well, first of all, it is that principle of man's saving power as resident within himself. "Let us build us a tower... and make us a name" (Gen. xi. 4): which was the re-action, as you well know, to the deluge; that if God decided to drown the world again, they would have found their own way of salvation by their tower unto heaven, and they would get above anything that God could do and be their own saviour. Now, blatantly of course, few people would talk like that, but in principle that is human: which comes right down to this, that there is something in man's nature of virtue, which, if it were only developed, nurtured, cultured, would result in his own emergence, his own salvation, his own deliverance by his own power, his own virtue. That is Babel or Babylon. See this great Babylon that I have made! (Daniel iv. 30). Now, Babel and Babylon is the "I" element which can do something, resulting in man's glory. The end of all things for man, according to his Divinely appointed destiny, is glory, but how you reach that destiny is quite another matter. God says that destiny is only possible of attainment through the Cross of the Lord Jesus, in which man is utterly emptied of himself. It is the way even of the Son of man, Who emptied Himself, and eventually was crowned with glory. But man does not naturally take that way.

You see, Babylon, after all, is the principle which we see exemplified in the beast and the false prophet. It is something in man himself which can be rested upon, worked upon, and will result in his own salvation. None of us here would contemplate that objectively as a proposition: nevertheless, we are all caught in it. I doubt whether there is anyone here who has not fallen in that respect. Have you never for a moment in your life been found searching

your own heart to make you happy, contented, at rest, satisfied, at peace with God, to bring you on to good terms with the Lord? You are doing it all the time. Every time you are miserable about yourself, that is it! You see, there are but two alterations, to be miserable about yourself or joyful in the Lord, and those who have the greatest reason to be miserable about themselves are the very people to be most joyful in the Lord, if only they knew God's basis of salvation; for God's basis of salvation is a very practical one. God's basis of salvation is this: "You are the most wretched and hopeless creature, and in yourself you will never be anything else; and I have looked upon you through your faith in My Son as though you had never sinned at all". That is God's basis of salvation. A real apprehension of that should deliver us those fits of misery about our own condition into a great restful joy in the Lord, and anything that is not that, beloved, is the curse of Babel.

God has put a curse upon that whole principle and essence of self-salvation, self-glory. Get into that realm and you may well be miserable, for you are in the realm of an active curse.

So the Church takes that up, and when we sing,
" 'Tis the Church triumphant singing,
Worthy the Lamb ",

do not let us project ourselves into some future date. Let us get right to that now. The Church according to God's mind is the embodiment of this thing; that in itself it is the most hopeless thing and yet in Christ a most glorious thing, full of hope, every prospect open to it through faith in the Lord Jesus; and yet at the same time in itself worthless. The Church is to be that. It is the issue of the Cross.

But then, you see, not only does the Cross remove the curse of Babel as a principle, but it also deals with that other phase of the curse of Babel, the divisive elements in man's nature. When God came

(concluded on front page)

continued from back page)

down and cursed those builders of the tower, He did so by confounding their language, and at that moment they became so many fragments, not able for a moment to understand one another, to walk together in agreement. They had no common basis of fellowship. They were scattered, confused, disintegrated. Calvary deals with that. It deals with all the divisive elements in man, overcomes them and transcends them. Of course, we know that in measure; but the Church is to be the embodiment of that. Oh well, that is another thing! The Church the embodiment of that, and yet the Church being what it is on the earth now! Oh yes! Let us say it again: not just the mystical, the abstract, the theoretical, but the practical reality reality right now here on the earth. It may be, as it was in the case of Israel after the captivity, that the real representation of God's thought will be bound up with a remnant. But it is to be there, God would have it.

Let us bring it home to our own hearts. The Cross really does mean for you and me that those things which naturally and in the flesh in us as His people would divide, would lead to misunderstanding, bringing about conflict between us, the Cross is to mean in our case the removal of those traces of the curse. They are marks of the curse, and the Cross has to deal with them, and has to lift you and me on to a plane where something greater than that operates, which transcends that and keeps us together in spite of all that old background. The marvel of the Cross is this, that there can be a going on in fellowship in spite, on the one hand, of much in the human make-up, constitution, temperament, disposition, which makes for great difficulty in going on together, and, on the other hand, despite all the direct assaults of Satan by all his means to break up that fellowship, there can be a going on triumphantly and a holding together and a coming out at the end, the thing not having been disintegrated. It can be; but it will only be if the Cross is a reality there. But if it is, you may know that the Cross is a reality, it has been working. If there is disruption and disintegration, you may take it that the people have failed in relation to the Cross.

I have often thought that the gift of tongues in the beginning was just one aspect of the triumphant work of the Cross over the work of Satan and the curse.

I am not asking for it now particularly; but it has sometimes been in my mind that when they all came into a place where Parthians and Medes and Elamites and dwellers in Mesopotamia, and so on, all together heard and understood everything in the tongue wherein each had been born, as though there might have been but one language, God through the Cross of His Son, had set aside Babel. Something had triumphed. Well, we are content to leave it at that. In the end we shall all speak one language, although we shall be out of every nation and tribe and kindred and tongue—a heavenly language.

Well now, if that is but a sign—and it is a sign—what does it signify? It signifies this, that the Cross is the secret, the basis, of the Church's witness, and the Church is to be the embodiment of that tremendous triumph of the Cross over these disruptive and divisive elements in the race, in you and in me. It has to come down to our relationships every day. The more we know the Cross, the better we get on together, and the quicker we will get over things which offend and divide. The Church, therefore, becomes the outcome of the Cross in this respect.

That is surely enough at the moment. It constitutes a challenge, a very solemn challenge, to our hearts. The Lord enable us to face this challenge of the Cross in all its meaning, and to face the implications. The Church is something real. Oh yes, it is very real. Do ask the Lord to make the meaning of the Church something more than this mystical thing, this objective, abstract thing. It has to come down here in our every-day life. You have said that you have seen the Church, the Body. You have testified to it and so on. What are you doing about it? Are you still living an independent life, still taking your own way, making your own plans, unrelated and out of fellowship, still violating those laws of fellowship and Body life, still a law to yourself? Well, if that is true, and inasmuch as that is true, you do not know the Cross, let alone the Church. You cannot know the Church until you know the Cross. You do not know the Cross; the Cross has not dealt with yourself in some way. Oh, if the Cross really does its work in us, we shall spontaneously come on to Church-ground, the ground of fellowship, relatedness, co-operation. So may the Lord produce practical issues.

T. A. S.

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Editor's Letter

Kilcreggan,
Scotland.

BELOVED OF GOD,

Once again I take my pen to share with you the exercise of my heart. It is something clearly recognised that "our beloved brother Paul" put down for the rest of the dispensation, and in concentrated essence, the full revelation which he had, when he was at length cut off from his many journeyings and scattered personal ministries. The wisdom and sovereignty of the Lord was thus most definitely behind the final imprisonments of His servant. While there are no "Pauls" among us now, and none of us would think for a moment that we come into his category, there is a factor contained in the above which does operate and apply so often where the Lord has servants and vessels related to His purpose, and we are more than well aware of it just now. Let us consider what evidently happened in the case of this "chosen vessel". At length, after much movement and a very great deal of preaching and teaching over a great area, and after many churches had come into being as the spontaneous issue of his message, he found himself physically limited to one house and room, and unable to move without a chain upon him. Moreover, he had information that many who owed much—if not everything—to him spiritually were disaffected toward him, and that many of the churches had turned from him. It was a depressing situation and might have forced him down into despair. But what really did happen? When the earth side of things, with all its time features and human factors seemed to be breaking down and becoming so disappointing and heart-breaking, the flood gates of the heavenly, eternal, and spiritual realities were opened. He was forced by the situation to get right back behind time and the earthly to the eternal counsels of the Godhead; to the foreknowledge, the foreordaining, the predestinating, the eternal purpose concerning His Son, etc. As he gave himself up to this contemplation and committed it to parchments for the churches, it was his own salvation, and has been the priceless possession of the Church through many many generations. It has also been the salvation of many a hard-pressed and sorely tried servant of Christ who also has known chains and imprisonment of some kind—spiritual if not literal. My point for the moment is this: the Lord allows or sovereignly ordains an experience of pressing in, hedging up, cutting off, and intense spiritual stress which has one inclusive object, but effects various things.

Much teaching has been given. Now it seems to be failing where it has been ministered, and there appears to be a great deal of contradiction. Its value, and perhaps even its truth seem to be questioned by the inconsistencies which appear. This, with much more of the same kind of thing, drives the servant of God down to his foundations, causes heart-searching as to his motives, tests him as to the faithfulness of God, and in many ways brings him flat up against his position. This is all very salutary. He will see what the weakness and defects have been, and can adjust. If his is a true position, he will be confirmed, but it will be without bigotry, for he is broken and emptied. When all the incidental matters are dealt with by the fires of his soul-searching situation, the ultimate intention of the Lord will be reached—a clearer, fuller, and more fruitful revelation. From the parts he will have come to the whole: from the circumference to the centre: from the incidental to the eternal: from the passing features to the abiding reality.

May I ask you, Does it not seem that something like this is happening to-day? Of course, I cannot tell how true this is with regard to America, but I know it is very true for many servants and instrumentalities of God in Europe and the East. For ourselves it is intensely true, and speaking personally, I can only say that the past four years have been the most agonising years of my life, in which bottom seems to have been touched very many times.

But what is it unto? What is the counterpart of Paul's reaction and concentrated message? I can only speak in the dawn as yet. Sometimes from my window I look out over the mountains and water before day-break and see those first faint rays of light which creep across the sky long before the sun can be discerned. It is like that, but the strong portent of the rays to my own heart is definitely this: I believe that there is a new movement of God on the near horizon. It is not a movement which can be put into sectional, departmental, or phasial terms, such as "revival", evangelistic, doctrine, missionary, or reform. But rather is it a movement to Christ. I am reminded as I write that in the biography of Dr. A. B. Simpson, of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, there are two fragments. One writer said of Dr. Simpson that "he lived before his time". Then Dr. Simpson himself said, "The great movement of to-day, the greatest movement of the Church's history is a CHRIST MOVEMENT: a revealing in our day, with a definiteness never before so real, of the person of the living Christ as the centre of our spiritual life, the source of our sanctification, the fountain of our physical life—the Prince-Leader of our work, the glorious coming King..."

I link the two statements because it is evident that that "Movement" did not take place in an adequate way in the life-time of Dr. Simpson, but he saw the vision and "lived before his time". Does not *everything* point to the necessity and possibility of such a movement coming now? There is no hope for the unity of Christians on this earth until they forsake all other ground than Christ. There—on that ground alone—is the strength needed by the Church to recover her authority and testimony. Oh, everything needed is there!! It is a tremendous challenge and test, and may cost much, but its very value involves this. Oh, for a new and adequate apprehension of the immense significance of Christ Himself! Let us pray much that this movement may begin in our hearts, and the hearts of the Lord's people everywhere. Let us ask for the necessary resultant grace to move from all other ground, and for the wisdom to avoid making Christ into a party. Only a new and mighty vision of Him can do with Christians what it did in Paul's case; i.e., emancipate from religious prejudice, suspicion, and fear, as well as from a merely earthly system of Christianity. No man can initiate such a movement; it must be by the Holy Spirit: but we can see the need, proclaim it, and urge to pray that it may quietly but deeply arise in many hearts. Much is breaking down; much is being suspended. The war has created conditions both negative and positive which would foster and point to a new place for Christ Himself; and the manifest development of Antichrist—the domination of the world by super-men and eventually man is not the least sign that God's Christ must come far more to the fore. The peace will bring greater problems and difficulties than the war has done, and no tradition will be equal to the situation. Christ alone will be sufficient, and the measure of Christ in believers will determine the measure of their endurance and overcoming.

Warmest greetings to you all, in Him,

Yours, that He may fill all things,
T. AUSTIN-SPARKS

From the Wilderness to the Land

No. 3

THE ENTRY INTO IN THE LAND

READING: Deut. i. 2-3; viii. 2; Heb. iii. 19; iv. 1.

We have been thinking of the distance of difference between Christ and ourselves. In virtue of the shed and sprinkled blood, Israel had been brought out of Egypt and made the people of God; they were the Lord's redeemed ones. But even so a fact existed which could not be overlooked, ignored or made light of, a fact which had to be recognised, and fully so. That fact was, and is, that even when we are the Lord's, in ourselves there is a vast distance of difference between ourselves as ourselves and Himself. Eleven days and forty years—not a fixed period, a period fixed by God; that is, not of necessity forty years. The distance is determined, not by geography or time, but entirely by the appropriation of faith.

Entering Into God's Rest

What is the end of the journey, the goal? What is

it all unto? God calls it "My rest". Rest, God's rest; that is the end of the journey, and how soon we reach the end of the journey entirely depends upon our apprehension of the meaning of rest, our faith's apprehension of the meaning of rest. You can be out of Egypt and into the end of the journey in no time where faith is large enough for it. But "we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief". The end of the journey is always immediately present to faith. It is not distant. It is nearer or farther according to faith.

Faith's Foundation for Entering into God's Rest

But we want to understand what the basis of this faith is, and therefore what the meaning of God's rest is. We have said that it is the apprehending of Christ. This letter to the Hebrews, which brings the journey and its end so much into view, is entirely given up to

laying the foundation of faith unto God's rest. Chapter by chapter or stage by stage, it presents us with that foundation, or those foundations. We might just look at one or two of them, but we begin with the all-inclusive and comprehensive one, the presentation of Christ at the beginning of the letter. There the whole background of all the rest is presented to us, the foundation of all that follows.

(a) God Given to Us in Sonship

It is that *Christ is God given to us in Sonship*: "The express image", "the effulgence"; to use the words of the prophet, "unto us a son is given" (Isa. ix. 6). Not only "a child is born", but "a son is given". It is God manifest in the flesh, Christ is God. Again, referring to the prophet's words, "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Prince of Peace, Father of Eternity" or Everlasting Father. This Son is called that, the Father of Eternity.

What is the value of that for rest, for faith unto rest? Oh, surely it must appeal to our hearts as being of supreme and infinite significance. You see what the Apostle is saying here. In the past the great revelations of God Himself were mediated through angels. What mighty and marvellous things were done through angels! The greatest things in that dispensation were done through angels. God came to men through angels. God communicated Himself through angels, revealed His mind through angels, and exercised His power through angels. The angels of God were constantly ascending and descending in that dispensation, to carry on the purpose of God amongst men. The highest form of God's manifestation was through angels.

But here the Apostle says: not unto angels, not through angels, but better than angels, higher than angels, Son-wise. God has given Himself in terms of Sonship. It is a great word of the prophet, "Jehovah has become my salvation" (Isa. xii. 2). Yes, the Name, the highest Name of all, Jehovah, the Lord Jehovah has become my salvation. Not a representative of the Lord, not even an angelic representative, but Jehovah Himself has become my salvation. The Lord Himself has come forth in this matter of our salvation, and if that is true, well, we must believe, our faith must go the whole way and believe either that Jehovah can fail or that He cannot, that Jehovah can do His work or He cannot, Jehovah can see this through or He cannot. If Jehovah cannot, it cannot be seen through. It is ultimate, final. It is no less than the Lord Himself.

That is the significance bound up with this first presentation in the letter to the Hebrews—the effulgence of His glory, the express image of His Person. God in Christ in terms of Sonship (the significance of which we shall note again in a moment) has come forth. That is the foundation of everything. The Lord personally, directly, immediately and absolutely, has taken this thing in hand. He has not committed it to the hands of angels or men, but has said, I Myself will accomplish this thing, I will go down and do it! "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto

himself" (II Cor. v. 19). That is the full foundation for faith that can lead us into rest, and immediately the journey is shorter or longer according to our apprehension of that; whether we are able to stand alongside of the Apostle, even when the gale is blowing, the storm is as a blast, and say, I believe God! (Acts xxvii. 25). I say the journey to rest is shorter or longer according to our ability to take that position. If Israel in the wilderness had taken that position, it would not have been forty years; but they did not believe God.

(b) God in Christ our Kinsman

Then you pass on in this letter and you find that is broken up, expressed in different forms. In the next place, God is revealed in Christ as having come to us in kinship. Passing into chapter ii from verse 10, you know that sublime section about "I and the children whom God hath given me"; I and the brethren—"I will declare thy name unto my brethren". Or again, "Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same." And then about the sons—"bringing many sons unto glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Children, brethren, sons: God has come forth in terms of sonship to bring about a kinship, to be the redeeming kinsman Himself. It is God Who is redeeming in Christ. Heirship—"joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. viii. 17), and so on. He is redeeming the lost inheritance, He is the redeeming kinsman. If redemption is to be at all, it must be by somebody Who Himself has a right to redeem because He is in the family, and Who Himself can and will make the family's condition His responsibility.

The family has lost its inheritance, has lost its all. Somebody has to take responsibility for recovering, and God in Christ has come down to take responsibility for our lost heritage, to recover it all in terms of kinship. The Father through the Son has done it. The point that I want specially to emphasize is that it is God Who has assumed this form of a kinsman to redeem, and if it is God Who has taken responsibility for it—and He has—that is the basis of faith unto rest.

You see how impossible it would be, because of the utterness of the situation, for anyone to enter into rest and deny God. You cannot enter into rest if you deny God. We are not dealing with truth, we are not dealing with doctrine, we are not dealing with things, we are not dealing even with angels, great as they are. We are dealing with God, and here He is coming to us in and through His Son in terms of kinship, so that in Christ He is to us our brother, our brother to redeem, taking responsibility. Usually even in earthly families, the elder brother is looked up to and trusted. So often he is the most wonderful person in the family for the rest of the family. There is nothing he cannot do. It is not always so, but so often it is. That is the idea brought in here. It is a family of sons that God has constituted, with the eldest Son, Who was able and willing to take full

responsibility for the family's title, the family's heritage, the family's destiny, the family's honour, and to secure it all in Himself. That is what is being said here. He has done that. What could we do? Nothing! But He has done it, and faith apprehending that can enter into rest, God's rest.

(c) God in Christ His Own Priest

But then we pass on and find the next phase, God in Christ becoming His own priest. Priests have failed, failed to carry things through to finality. They all failed, they made nothing perfect—that is the argument here. So God Himself became His own priest. It is God in Christ in priestly activity carrying out all the functions of priesthood, and the functions of priesthood are just to satisfy God in all His requirements. This is where the subtle fascination and attraction and power of Rome lurks. The Roman system is built upon the idea of priesthood. The priest stands between you and God, and stands for you, and all you have to do is to pass everything over to him and take no responsibility yourself; you need not take any responsibility, the priest will take all responsibility for you. That, of course, has degenerated into this kind of saying: Do as you like, pay the priest and he will clear it up with God. But behind that there is this fact that man craves to have the responsibility God-ward taken off himself by somebody, to be freed from that responsibility for himself, and to come to that absolute rest where the responsibility is not his at all. The Roman system has provided a false answer to that craving of man and put man in a false position. But the craving remains. You and I have it. Our deepest longing and need is for a priest, somebody to take responsibility for us, so that we do not have to take that responsibility. Oh, that I might be free from an evil conscience, may be perfectly at rest because someone all the time is standing and answering to God for me. And here it is: God has said, I will answer to Myself for you, I will be My own priest to satisfy Myself on your behalf.

We find it such a difficult lesson to learn, just what the High Priestly function and ministry of our Lord Jesus is. "Seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us" (Heb. vii. 25). You notice what the Apostle says about His being able to sympathize because He Himself has been here, been where we are, been along our road, knows all about it, been tempted in all points as we are, although without sin. He has been here and He is a sympathetic High Priest, He understands it all. He is not a stranger, and He ever liveth to make intercession in perfect sympathy, and He is there taking responsibility for us before God. Is not that a ground of rest? Ought we not to be at the journey's end much more quickly if only faith could grasp that. Apart from faith, we shall all the time be trying to put ourselves right with God and be stuck on the road, going round in the wilderness. Progress waits upon faith's apprehension of this thing. Cast the responsibility for your salvation and sanctification upon the One Who has taken that responsibility.

Listen again to words in this letter about being

saved from an evil conscience. How? Through faith (Heb. x. 22). Not cleansing our own consciences, but by faith in Him. God has come in the Person of His Son to be the priest that He requires, that is, to satisfy Himself.

(d) God in Christ His Own Sacrifice

What is true of the priesthood is next shown to be true of the sacrifice. "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body didst thou prepare for me; in whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hadst no pleasure. Then said I, Lo. I am come" (Heb. x. 5-7). God in Christ has come to be His own sacrifice. You notice a whole section is given up to pointing out the futility and weakness and failure of the sacrifices of the Jewish system, how they broke down and came short, and how it was not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin. But then, after the millions and millions of sacrifices offered on Jewish altars, one sacrifice, one for ever, did the work, and God provided Himself the sacrifice. In His Son He became His own sacrifice; and what more perfect than that? That is final surely; one offering for ever. This is the basis of rest, His own sacrifice once for all.

The Journey Longer or Shorter According to Faith's Appropriation

We cannot take all the aspects of this revelation, of this unfolding of the ground of rest, but what I want you to see is this, that this was all present in type in the wilderness for forty years. It was all there in type, and yet they went on for forty years. It was there very early in their wilderness history, and if only faith had grasped the significance of what was present at that moment, the forty years would have been cut down to perhaps eleven days; eleven days' straight journey if faith had grasped what was present all the time.

What I want to emphasize is this, that you and I are not of necessity bound to make a long journey and go over years in this matter. It entirely depends upon our appropriation of what is here to-day whether we enter into rest. The end of the journey is here now. It was there all the time. Those types that they had of Christ were the end of the journey in spiritual essence and value. There is nothing more at the end of the forty years. When they go over into the land there was nothing more, it was still the same basis. God has not to do anything further, has not to do anything; it is all there right at the beginning. We can come into rest now if we take hold of what God has given us now.

The Power of a People in Rest

But oh, how important it is that you and I should seek to exercise this faith; because you can see quite well that it was not just a matter of entering into a spiritual state of blessing and enjoyment for themselves. Their very vocation hung upon their being in rest. The object of their calling and election was at stake. All God's purposes in them were bound up

with their entering into rest. They were ineffective and unfruitful until they were in rest. They were defeated and weak until they were in rest, but when they went over into what typified God's rest, they were mightily effective. You see what can happen by a people in rest. See Jericho's mighty walls going down by a people in rest. They march round the wall, just going round once, and that is the day's work; and again to-morrow; not very hard work. I do not know how long it took them to march round; a good healthy walk, quietly walking round once a day for a week. It was more strenuous on the seventh day, seven times round. And how much energy it takes to shout, I do not know. That was the way; a people in rest in type, and down came Jericho. And as they went on the seven nations mightier than they came down one after another because typically they were a people in rest.

And do you know that one of the great strategies of the Devil, in order to hold his own against us, is to get us into unrest. One of the great triumphs of Satan against the Church is to get it robbed of its rest, its quiet assurance. Satan can do little against a people in assurance, in rest. He can do anything with people who are not sure, not certain, distracted, restless,

fretful, anxious, questioning, doubting. You have no power against him when you are like that, always in the unrest of uncertainty of a to-morrow that never comes, a future that never arrives to keep us from rest to-day. I do feel that you and I must seek very much to enter every day with a very fervent prayer that that day in itself shall be in the rest of God, so far as our hearts are concerned. Whatever it may hold, whatever storms, in our hearts we are quietly at rest with God, being still and knowing that He is God. There is a tremendous power in that. There is no power in a fretful life, there is no strength where there is doubt, but there is a mighty power where there is a quiet confidence in God; and that is the point. Satan would postpone that and keep us going round in this everlasting circle, a wilderness state, because it is to his gain, and to our loss; it is to the defeat of the Lord in His purpose. "They could not enter in because of unbelief."

Now may the Lord at least lay emphasis in our hearts upon the necessity for giving diligence to enter His rest for every purpose of His glory. Above all things may we seek the rest of faith, because of its tremendous potency against the enemy and in the realization of God's purpose. T.A.S.

The Cross, The Church and the Conflict

No. 3.

THE CONFLICT

We shall, by the Lord's enabling, go on with our consideration of the Church, the Cross, and the Spiritual Conflict.

So far we have been occupied with the Cross and the Church; in the first place seeing that the Cross, in the mind and purpose of God, is intended to lead immediately and directly to the Church. Just as the altar at the door of the court of the tabernacle in the wilderness stood right in direct line with the sanctuary, and led to it—the priestly ministry commenced at that altar, and then passed on right into the sanctuary and found its consummation in the Most Holy Place—so the Cross of the Lord Jesus stands there as the very gateway into the House of God, and is intended to lead the people of God straight through into the corporate life in union with Christ. And so also in the temple, the altar is that which leads into the house; and in the rebuilding of the temple by the remnant back from the captivity, the first thing was the setting of the altar into its place, and then the laying of the foundation of the Lord's house, and the building of it. So it is in the mind of God always, that the Cross carries with it the House, and leads to it, and any kind of Gospel which ends with the Cross as a thing in itself and does not carry through to a living expression of the House of God, the Church, is a Gospel which has failed of its main purpose in God's mind. Well, we have been emphasizing that consider-

ably, but the reiteration of it may be useful, for the Lord to revive and perhaps make clear in a new way what it is He is seeking.

Then we have gone on to see that when the Church really does come in, it becomes the great practical Gospel or demonstration of the meaning of the Cross, because it embodies and shows forth all that Calvary was intended to mean. God's preaching is not just a preaching in words, the proclaiming of the Gospel is not only the enunciation of truths; it is the practical living expression of that in a people. Otherwise angels could have preached the Gospel; anybody could preach it. The Lord has bound up a revelation of Himself with a people who are the living embodiment of that revelation, and that is the function and nature of the Church.

Well now, we move on a little in regard to the third thing, namely, the conflict. The Cross and the Church being bound together in great Divine meaning explain the conflict. From that very fact conflict results; it just springs up. The Church embodying the meaning of Calvary is the occasion of the conflict, and where there is a real apprehension of the full meaning of the Cross and a practical expression of it in a people, there you have conflict in its most intense and persistent form. To say that in other words, the measure of the living corporate embodiment and expression of the meaning of Calvary is the measure of spiritual

warfare. The more there is of the living apprehension of the Cross and the more there is of a living expression of God's thought about the Church, the more there will be of spiritual conflict, the more the antagonism and hatred of the powers of evil will be manifested, expressed, demonstrated.

The Supreme Object of the Cross and the Church

Now in this matter of the conflict, we should begin by reminding ourselves that the Cross and the Church have one supreme object in view. It is always helpful to be able to reduce great things to concrete and direct implications. The Cross is a great thing, a comprehensive thing. The Church too is a great and a comprehensive thing. We could talk about the Cross all our lives, and be moving round to different angles and aspects all the time. Who will ever be able to exhaust the meaning of the Cross of the Lord Jesus? We can talk about the Church in the same way and go on indefinitely covering new ground in relation to the Church. It is always beyond us, there is always more; and yet, when all has been said that ever will be said about the Church and the Cross, the whole thing can be gathered into one quite simple and direct meaning. It focuses upon one thing, and one thing only: The Cross in all its fulness of meaning, the Church in all its mighty, Divine significance, have one object in view ultimately, and that object is the absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ. Say what you like about the Cross, say what you can about the Cross, it all comes back to that. Its focal point is the Lordship of Jesus Christ in fulness and finality. The Cross in every phase of its meaning and application comes to that eventually.

The question raised all the time by the Cross is, Yes, but how does it work out in the dethronement of every other authority within and without the life of the child of God, and the enthronement of the Lord Jesus in utterness as Lord? That is the question all the time. We are not dealing with things in relation to the Cross. There may be many things incidental, but they are not ends in themselves. There are things in us, all sorts of things in us, and those things have to be met by the Cross, and the Cross has to be applied to them; but never let us think that the business of the Holy Spirit with the Cross is just to deal with these things as though they were the end that the Lord was seeking. No, in dealing with the things, the Lord has an object in view all the time, and it is toward that object that He is dealing with every detail, and that object is the absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ.

And so it is with the Church. Oh, how many things there are about the Church which are wonderful and glorious to contemplate; its nature, its function, its vocation, and so on. But none of these things in the mind of God is an end in itself. The Church ultimately exists for one thing only, and that is this sovereign, Headship of the Lord Jesus. Everything that we have to say about one another, about related life, about fellowship, about corporate expression, about functioning, and all the other things to do with the

Church, they are only on the way to this other thing, that the Lordship of Christ, His sovereign Headship over all things to the Church, might be in expression. There is one thing central to this universe in God's thought into which everything else is gathered, and that is the Lordship of His Son Whom He made heir of all things, through Whom also He made the ages.

The Focal Point of All Satanic Opposition

Well, if that is true, we are well on the way to understanding the conflict; because the Lordship of Christ is the one focal point of all Satanic challenge and opposition. Never let us think that the antagonism of Satan relates to mere details, mere incidents, relates to us or to things. No, Satan has a comprehensive view of the situation. He is able to take in the whole range of things, and to see the significance of details, and if he focuses upon any detail, as he does, it is only with his far view, his whole view, that he does it. The end that he is after through everything is this matter of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Yes, he may focus a good deal of attention upon a relationship, upon two believers who are brought together, who have to live together, and he may bring a great amount of power and stress and cunning to bear upon those related lives in order to divide them. Do you think he is interested in dividing people as such, and that, when he has done that, he will be satisfied because that is done? Never! That is not his object at all. In making that division, he has something very much bigger in view, and that is the Lordship of Jesus Christ. And so our relationships as just two people carry with them the great significance of the lordship of Satan or the Lordship of Christ, and anything between just two simple children of God resolves itself into no less a matter than the ultimate thing in God's universe. The ultimate thing may be bound up with just two simple children of God in their related lives.

And what is true in that, is true in a countless number of things which in themselves may seem to be very insignificant and hardly worth taking account of. How petty many things seem, how paltry! You almost blush to talk about them as things, they are so silly, and yet somehow or other Satan is most interested in them. But do you think that Satan is petty or paltry in that sense, just wanting to make a lot of silly mischief here and there? Oh no, we give him credit for something more than that. His kingdom is at stake, and in all these silly little matters, so absurd and ridiculous, there is bound up this mighty issue of the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Thus in all these matters, the Cross has to have a very deep place; in our relationships, in the twos and the threes, and the little circles, so that Satan does not get in and secure a foothold to destroy this expression of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The Cross has to be there. The Cross carries with it, not just the dealing with failure, little things in the lives of God's people: the Cross carries with it the immense issue of the Lordship of God's Son.

The Church, therefore, takes up that meaning of the Cross and is to be a company of the Lord's people on this earth which represents the overthrow of Satan's power, in his destruction of oneness, fellowship, relatedness, co-operation, and this bringing into view of the absolute Lordship and sovereign Headship of Jesus Christ. The Church is for that. This is the question bound up with the Cross and with the Church, namely, Christ's Lordship, and Satan is interested in the Lord's people only in so far as this ultimate thing is being really affected.

You see, you can have what is called "the Church", and what are called "the churches", with no knowledge whatever of this spiritual warfare. This real spiritual conflict in the heavenlies against the forces

of evil is a thing which is altogether foreign to that which is called "the Church" here in this world. They do not have any fights, any battles, any warfare. It is something outside their ken. Why? They have got no impact of a living knowledge of the Cross. The Cross with them is a story, a history, a doctrine, a creed, not a mighty inwrought reality and power. Immediately it becomes that, they will know the fight. Satan does not trouble where there is no living working of the Cross. That is not the Church. You cannot have a church without the Cross, and you cannot have the Cross without a living expression which provokes the powers of evil. That is the Cross according to God's mind. (to be continued)

T.A.S.

The Representation of the Invisible God

No. 3 (continued)

Representation by the Holy Spirit

The New Testament is just full of this work of the Holy Spirit acting sovereignly to precipitate situations in which a new knowing of the Lord becomes indispensable to life, to very existence, and when that is brought about the way is open for the Lord to reveal Himself, and to come in in some new way; and that is the enlargement of representation. The Holy Spirit, in His sovereignty, holds us to His step by step method; He never acts mechanically, He acts only in life. So you see, in the book of the Acts, the Acts of the Holy Spirit, He always kept the Lord's servants at very short commons in the matter of what He was going to do. He never put the sovereignty into their hands, He always retained it in His own hands. In the Book of the Acts you cannot have a missionary programme; there is no programme there. Men, of course, now have resolved the New Testament into a missionary programme, though in fact it was not one. Would to God we could get back behind programmes, back to the point where the sovereignty is in the hands of the Holy Spirit entirely.

The Holy Spirit Directing Service

That is seen in the choice and sending out of the representatives of Christ. You see it in Antioch; Paul and Barnabas are there, and for a whole year men with whom a great destiny is bound up by foreordination must be there under God's hand, and await God's time. Especially was this the case with Paul, known of God from all eternity as the man for a tremendous mission. But even so, and although apprised by the Lord from heaven of his mission right from the beginning—"To this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness" (Acts xxvi. 16)—he cannot take the sovereignty of his missionary calling into his own hands and work it out. He must get into that company at Antioch, that representation of the Body, and wait for the Holy Ghost. He waits twelve months there at Antioch,

perhaps a little more, and then the Holy Ghost said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them" (Acts xiii. 2). The Holy Spirit is holding this matter of their life-work in His hands as sovereign. They cannot decide when to take it up, even though they may know in their hearts quite definitely what their life-work is.

Then, as they go, they are not allowed to sit down and draw up a line of action, a scheme, a plan, a timetable. They go under the sovereignty of the Spirit. They reach a certain point and Paul thinks one day of Ephesus, and his natural mind consecrated to the Lord gets to work. Ephesus is a great city, a very influential city. If only he can get to Ephesus and get the Church planted there, get things going there, it will be a tremendous thing! Yes, I think for the Lord's sake, we ought to go to Ephesus! But they were not suffered of the Holy Ghost to preach the Word in Asia. Well, Bithynia is a good place, a very important place, and it presents a great door of opportunity: we had better go to Bithynia! No, the Holy Ghost suffered them not to go to Bithynia; and while they tarried, not suffered of the Holy Ghost to preach the Word in Asia or Bithynia, a vision appeared to Paul in the night, a man of Macedonia, and Europe is indicated first. Ephesus and Bithynia will come in the order of the Spirit, in the Spirit's sovereign time, and the sovereign time of the Spirit is not yet in that direction. The sovereign time of the Spirit is just now in this other direction, Europe, Philippi (Acts xvi. 6-10).

Fruitfulness Vitally Related to the Spirit's Sovereignty

Now all this is only taking little fragments out to indicate and emphasise this, that the Holy Spirit coming into a vessel comes in terms of absolute Divine sovereignty to take the rule of our lives out of our hands, and that is why the Holy Spirit can never come and do His work until you have been to Jordan.

Until the Cross is a fact, an accomplished fact, there can be no sovereign government of the Holy Spirit carrying all the Divine programme; for the Cross means the deposing, not only of the sinful body of the flesh, but of the natural man. Paul is as consecrated to God, to Christ, as ever a man has ever been on this earth, with one exception, and yet even Paul with his utter consecration to the Lord cannot assume this missionary programme and follow it out himself. He has to be a bondsman of Jesus Christ, he has to be under the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit, he has to recognise when the Spirit suffers not. There would have been, and there would be to-day, a very great deal more fruitfulness, if the Church were governed in this same way. What has happened is that Mark xvi. 15—"Go ye into all the world"—has become a missionary programme that anybody may adopt at will. All you have to do is to get saved, and adopt that, and go into all the world and preach the Gospel. Well, God forbid that I should disparage anything in the way of preaching the Gospel: that is not the point. But what about the effect of it all comparatively after two thousand years? Half the world is not touched yet after two thousand years. Look at the difference between the few Apostolic years, with the range then covered and the impact registered, and all the centuries which have followed.

Is not that an argument for this one thing, that you cannot adopt the missionary manifesto and commission and go and work it out yourself; that this is a Holy Spirit business; and while what I am saying may seem to be the negative side, I want it to be the positive. When the Holy Spirit gets hold of the situation, He will do it, but He has to be sovereign.

The Cross therefore clears the way for the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit, and the Cross means that even consecrated natural minds have to have something more than their own consecration as the governing factor. So many say or think, If only I am consecrated to the Lord, then I ought to do anything that comes into my head that I think would serve the Lord! Oh no, that may be zeal, but not according to knowledge; and that may be waste.

The Sovereignty of the Holy Spirit in Relation to His Perfect Knowledge

Now let us not go round the thing any more, but just strike the heart of it. It is this: the Holy Spirit demands absolute sovereign rights in our life, and to take the sovereignty right out of our own hands; and that, of course, progressively. However much we may know, we do not know all that is in the mind of the Spirit, for the Holy Spirit never grows. The Holy Spirit of God never has grown, He never does grow, His mind does not enlarge. You never think of the mind of God enlarging, you never think of God growing. I say that reverently. The Holy Spirit never gets any new knowledge. From the very beginning, the Holy Spirit has all the knowledge that can ever be had. His knowledge is perfect.

That is the significance of that wonderful word in the book of the Revelation, where everything is con-

summated and brought to its full end: "Saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God" (Rev. iii. 1.). It is a figurative or symbolic term which means, He that hath perfect knowledge, the perfection of spiritual knowledge. He has that from the beginning, and I say again, the Holy Spirit has never acquired one fragment of new knowledge as He has gone on; He has had it all from the beginning. When He came He had as complete a knowledge of things as ever He will have. The Spirit's knowledge is absolutely final, but for ourselves what we do not know? At most we know but a mere fragment of what the Holy Spirit knows and means. That means that we are going to get a great deal more knowledge as we go on. We can only get that increase of knowledge as we are prepared to learn things all over again, all anew. You see what I mean. There is no hope whatever unless the Holy Spirit can in sovereignty just show us that we know nothing, and that we have everything to learn, and that His knowledge is infinite and will always be miles ahead of us, and therefore adjustment on our part will be necessary again and again and again. Have you come to a fixed position about truth, about light, about the ways of God, about the mind of the Lord, about what you ought to do and ought not to do, and what you are never going to do? Have you come to a fixed place? If so, you have shut the door on the Holy Ghost. No one who believes in the Holy Spirit could ever possibly say, I shall never do that! Peter said that. Nothing common or unclean has ever passed my lips, and never will! That was his position, but the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit showed that everything of God's purpose in his apostleship hung upon whether he abandoned that closed position: and he could quote Scripture for his position, too! It does not matter. One of the remarkable things about the New Testament is the unlooked for interpretations it gives to Old Testament Scriptures. No wonder the Jews and the Judaizers who dogged Paul everywhere would say, This man reads a lot into the Old Testament that is not there, this man is putting constructions upon the Old Testament that it will not bear, he has taken out of the Old Testament something that is not there! Look at what Paul says about Old Testament things. I cannot see it means that in the Old Testament. It does look as if he is using the Old Testament and putting a construction on it that was not meant in the Old Testament. It is an extraordinary thing how in the New Testament the Old is given a meaning you could never find without the New Testament. The Holy Spirit knows what He means, and He means a great deal more than ever men have yet seen. The very Scripture you quote may mean more than ever you intended it to mean. I think this is enough to show you how necessary it is for us to be in a position where we are really open to the Lord, and really under the Holy Spirit's government, ready to let go our most cherished position, if the Holy Spirit indicates that is the way. To say that, is not to say we are to be unstable and carried about by every wind of doctrine and sleight of men,

or that we are just going to follow anything that comes along.

I do not think the Holy Spirit ever denies Himself. What the Holy Spirit has said at one time, He is not going to contradict at another. But what may seem contradiction may be in this form, namely, that the Holy Spirit transcends what He has already said. Just as a miracle is not necessarily a violation of natural law, but a transcending of natural law, so the Holy Spirit will not contradict or violate anything He has said before, but He will transcend it and, when He does transcend, it may look like a contradiction. It may be you will be able to say, I am quite sure the Lord led me at a certain time and in a certain direction, but He has led me right away from that now! That is not necessarily a contradiction, that is a transcending, a moving on. At that time you could not have gone the further step, He could only get you that far then. But in His own mind that was only a step which was to lead to another, and yet another, and you leave a lot behind in such a process. But oh, the point is that the Holy Spirit shall be able to do what He is after.

Even in the case of the Lord Jesus, it was like that. His was a sinless nature and a sinless natural mind, but He would not use it apart from the Father, and if One with a sinless natural mind will not use it independently, what about us? How much more necessary it is for the Holy Spirit to be sovereign in our case. Everything of power lies in that direction. "Ye shall receive power, the Holy Spirit coming upon you" (Acts i. 8).

The Menace of the Natural Mind

I think we can leave it with this one simple emphasis now, namely, this need for the Holy Spirit to be sovereign. He must. There are good people, godly people, who do not see, and who will not agree, and the problem arises: Oh, they are godly, they are consecrated, they have lived for God for many years, and yet they are so opposed to certain things which

seem to be so evidently the mind of the Spirit; and they would deny that. What is the explanation? Well, there may be several explanations, but I suggest that this is one possible explanation in a great many cases, namely, that the natural mind has never known the Cross; yes, the consecrated natural mind. I am not talking about the wicked natural mind. The consecrated natural mind has never known the Cross. Our own mind is still our mind, it is our judgment, even after we are saved. What we have said about Paul and Ephesus and Bithynia, and other cases, is true of all the most consecrated people. They still have a mind which they can follow which is not the mind of the Spirit. The mind of the Spirit is acting in another way from their mind. They would go this way for the Lord. Oh, so devoted to the Lord, it is all in the Lord's interests; they would go that way, but the Spirit is taking another course. Upon what does the whole issue rest at such a time? Upon whether the Cross has been planted sufficiently deeply in that life as to take the sovereignty of mind out of its hands, so that the mind of the Spirit can be sovereign. That is a very important thing. Are you quite sure that the sovereignty of mind has been taken out of your hands into the hands of the Holy Spirit, and that it is the sovereign mind of the Holy Spirit that is governing, and that it is not merely the case that you are sure of yourself, quite fixed and final in your own conviction about a thing, and that your own strength of mind and will, your reason, back of it all has fixed you there? You may be a most devoted child of God, and yet it can be like that with you. It is a terrible possibility for the Spirit not to be sovereign in a most devoted child of God, for their own minds still to be sovereign. There is no way through there; that is deadlock, that is a closed door. If we are going to be here in that growing representation of the Lord, we have to be on the same basis as the Lord was on. That is to say, from the first to the last it is the Spirit Who is to be sovereign, and that by the power of the Cross.

T.A.S.

Our Acceptance in Christ

READING: I Cor. i. 30; Rom. viii. 1; Eph. i. 6; Col. ii. 10.

Is it not well for us sometimes to go around to the God-ward side of the covenant, and from much and bitter self-condemnation, enter into God's judgment of us as it is in Christ? Faith has its appointed rest as well as its prescribed labor, when from the week-day toil and conflict of working out our own salvation, we may enter into our chamber of peace in the Lord, and shutting our doors about us say, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee,"—so bountifully, if we remember it, that in our destitution of any satisfying righteousness, Christ is of God "made unto us righteousness," and in our emptiness of all good, "of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace."

Many will warn us of the peril of slothfulness and vain confidence arising from such a doctrine; and we on our part must warn such of the danger alike of a feeble faith and futile works arising from an unestablished assurance. If faith has no standing ground except what it wins for itself; no stronghold except what it is enabled to build from time to time by its own endeavours, it can have very little comfort, and can make but few conquests. And God has not ordained the matter thus. He has put a greater attainment behind us, than the most ardent disciple dares to place immediately before himself, even completeness in the Lord Jesus.

And so from every fresh manifestation of our self-incompleteness, we may retreat under cover to this gracious assurance, "Ye are complete in Him." We

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may sink into Christ when we cannot rise to Him. And thus we shall be made strong and victorious through apparent defeat, as again and again—

"The steps of Faith
Fall on the seeming void and find
The Rock beneath."

If it now be asked, How can it be true of imperfect, tempted, and failing believers that they are complete in Christ? we must find the answer in God's gracious judgment of them as revealed by the Spirit. From this it would appear that so far as the question of the Christian's acceptance and standing before a righteous law is concerned, God sees nothing from His throne but Christ Jesus alone and altogether. And since the believer is in Him and one with Him, he shares his place in the Father's heart, and unworthy as he is in himself, yet he may know without a doubt that he is "*accepted in the Beloved*".

Is not the occasion of much of our distrust and darkness to be found in the fact that we estimate ourselves by ourselves, "according to the measure of a man," instead of according to the measure of Christ? He is the true exponent of our standing before God. "As He is, so are we in this world." He holds us in Himself, and presents us to the eye of the Father, bright in the shining vestments of His own righteousness, and rich with the dowry of His

blood-bought merit. He is not a mediator of one but of two. He not only represents God to us in His own being, "the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person," but He represents us to God. We see God in Christ. God sees us in Christ. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. We in Christ are reconciled unto God. Never can we pray, "O Lord, look Thou upon me; preserve my soul, for I am holy." More and more shall we learn to take up and urge, with all the energy of a self-ignoring faith, the cry, "Behold, O God, our Shield, and look upon the face of thine Anointed." And the evenness of our joy and the stability of our hope depend upon our keeping our gaze fixed immovably upon that one Blessed Object upon which the Father's gaze is always fixed.

If we measure our hope solely by the clearness with which Christ's likeness is reflected in our own character and experience, we can find little comfort. For our life is at best but a dim and distorted mirror that can neither hold nor reflect any perfect image. If, forgetting ourselves, we delight only in looking unto Jesus and tracing the lineaments of His divine countenance, we shall not only be ever growing into the same image from glory to glory till we are sanctified; but remembering that God contemplates us even now in that image, we shall be able to rejoice as those that are already justified.

(Extract from "In Christ" by Dr. A. J. Gordon.)

NEW PUBLICATIONS

It is expected that before the next issue of the "Witness and Testimony" the following books will be off the Press—

"The Servant of the Lord"	Price 8d.	Post free 9d.	U.S.A. 15 cents.	Post free 17 cents.
"The School of Christ"	" 10d.	" " 11½d.	" 20 cents.	" " 23 cents
"The Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus"	" 10d.	" " 11½d.	" 20 cents.	" " 23 cents.

MOTTO FOR 1945—Hanging Size: Threepence each (postage 1d.), 3s. 2d. per dozen, post free.

Greeting Cards: Twopence each (postage 1d.), 2s. 2d. per dozen, post free.

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