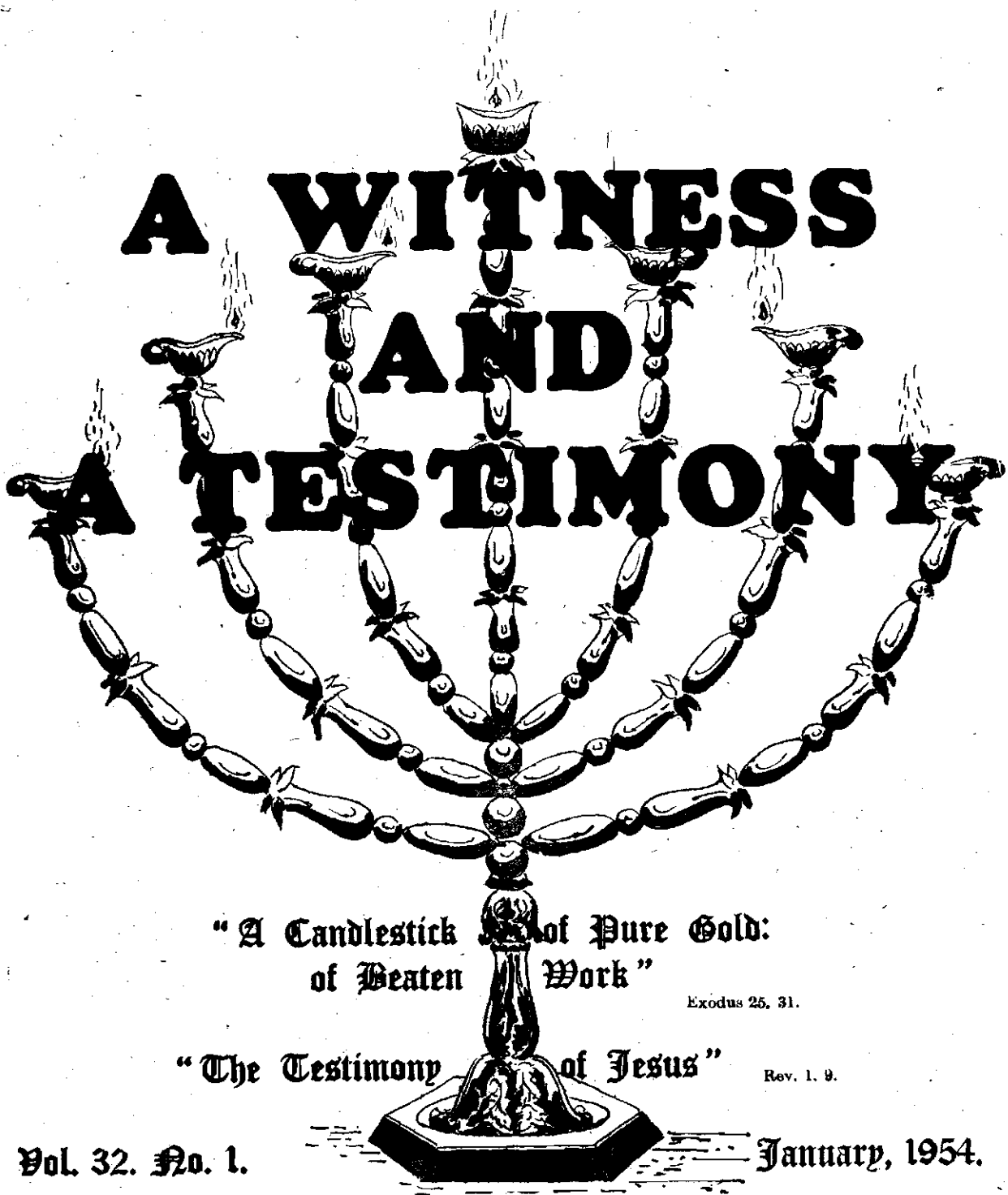


A WITNESS AND TESTIMONY



“A Candlestick of Pure Gold:
of Beaten Work”

Exodus 25. 31.

“The Testimony of Jesus”

Rev. 1. 9.

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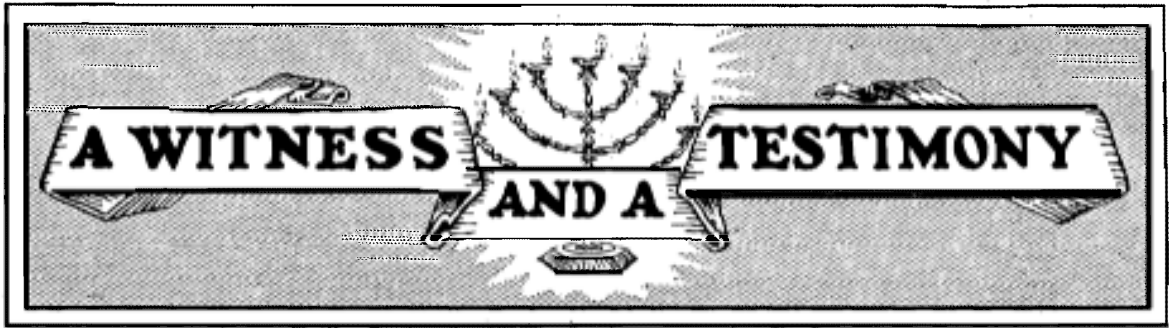
THIS MINISTRY

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

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

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

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



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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRIST

VIII THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HIS BAPTISM

Reading : Luke iii, 21 - 22 ; iv, 1 - 12.

THE MEANING OF BAPTISM

THIS section of Luke which we have read contains all the principles and elements of what we have been occupied with in this series of meditations—that is, the significance of Christ. Here we have the significance of Christ as the presenting to God of a manhood, a humanity, which, being according to God's mind, has given back to it the opened heaven which was lost by the first man ; the restoration of the face of God which was turned away from Adam and his race because of the kind of man that he became through disobedience. That, in a sentence or two, is the significance of Christ.

Now Luke, as all Bible students know, is peculiarly the Gospel of the representation of Christ as the Son of Man. This Gospel is a record of the life, works and words of the Son of Man, given without any spiritual interpretation—just the record. It is the only Gospel which has a preface. Luke says that he took pains to ascertain the truth of all the things that he was about to write. The spiritual interpretation came later. It waited upon two things: firstly, the coming of the Holy Spirit as the interpreter ; secondly, Spirit-indwelt people to whom He could interpret. In this record, then, we have no spiritual interpretation, but from the vantage-ground of our now having the Spirit and the interpretation in the later New Testament, we are able to see the spiritual principles which are here.

I must condense very much into a short space, so let us come to this matter of Christ's baptism, and reiterate what is probably well-known to most. It is necessary to our purpose that we should first of all be reminded of the meaning of baptism itself. Baptism is not peculiarly or exclusively a Christian ordinance. There was a Jewish baptism by water, and when John came baptizing, he was not doing anything strange so far as Israel was concerned. They were very familiar with it as a kind of 'nationalisation' ordinance, when a Gentile wanted to embrace the Jewish faith, just as Christians are baptized. In the pagan world baptism was also known—not of water but of fire. The basic significance in Jewish, Christian or pagan world is the same, but for the Christian it is so much deeper and more meaningful. With the Jew, baptism simply meant that the man died to his old racial connections as a Gentile, and rose to become in effect a Jew, a member of another race. With the pagan, the baptism of fire or 'making their sons to pass through the fire'—you remember that phrase in the Old Testament—was simply a passing as into death, with the destruction of an old connection, an old system, and an initiation into something altogether new. In Christian baptism, the same ideas are present, but with this extra, that this baptism speaks of the utter depravity of man. Pagans would not admit that, and

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the Jews would not admit that. But Christian baptism testifies to the utter depravity of man, his hopelessness before God; it says that he is by God utterly rejected, unacceptable, and that if there is to be any hope at all he must die and rise again. It must be a death and a burial, signifying the complete passing out of that man, as to all that he himself is and as to all that with which, by nature in Adam, he is connected. Man's depravity calls for—not repairs, but death and burial.

That gives tremendous and wonderful significance to the baptism of Jesus.

He who knew no sin, in whom there were no seeds of depravity; He who was the Son of God, who held the title in His own rights to be equal with God, and was equal with God; He who was with the Father in glory, as He prayed, "Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John xvii, 5): He came and identified Himself with man, in his utter depravity and God-rejection. When He came to Jordan to be baptized, it was a most wonderful thing that happened—that He, being such as He was, should take the place, in death, of one completely cast out by God, buried from His sight, put away as being wholly unacceptable to the eyes of God, identifying Himself with sinful man.

It is small wonder that John the Baptist, the 'baptizer', demurred when He came to be baptized. John would have forbidden Him. "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" (Matt. iii, 14). John could not understand this—because God had spoken to John, God had intimated to John that the Messiah was in the vicinity. John knew that he was the forerunner, that he was fulfilling the prophecies concerning himself as the opener of the door to the Christ, and he had the intimation that this was He; and he stood back aghast that such a One should wish to take this place. "Ye offspring of vipers", John was saying—"you serpents' brood, fleeing from the oncoming fire of judgment, trying to get into the water for your escape!" That is how John viewed those who came to be baptized. And then Jesus came on that ground. How marvellous is the condescension of our Lord Jesus! How far down He has gone for our salvation! How utterly He has touched the depths for our sin and sinfulness! Can He do more?

CHRIST'S BAPTISM NOT FOR HIMSELF

And then John's great declaration afterward. "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away

the sin of the world!" (John i. 29). That is a confirmation of his apprehension of the significance of Christ: he saw that this Man was not dying for His own sin; He was not being baptized because He Himself was a sinner. He was doing it for the sin of the world. This was all a rehearsal of the Cross which was coming later, and surely this in itself speaks to us—could anything speak more forcibly than this?—of that great feature of God's Man, heaven's Man, the Man who will get the open heaven, the Man who will have the face of God—that wonderful feature of His humility. Yes, He took the form of a man, was "found in fashion as a man" (Phil. ii. 7-8)—a true man; His was true humanity.

CHRIST IDENTIFIED IN HEAVEN
BUT NOT RECOGNISED ON EARTH

There seems a paradox here, almost a contradiction, but here it is. There was nothing on the outside at all to indicate that Jesus was different from any other man. John said, "I knew him not" (John i. 31, 33). This is strange, is it not? He must have heard of Jesus. Their mothers were kinswomen, and had had a joyful time together a few months before John's birth, on the occasion of the annunciation to Mary; and all that had happened right up through the thirty years must have been knowledge to John of Jesus. But he had not met Him, he did not know Him personally. He says: "I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize in water, he said unto me, Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and abiding upon him, the same is he that baptizeth in the Holy Spirit. And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God" (John i. 33-34). He was identified by heaven but not recognised on earth. He was so like other men on the outside—true man; and yet how different inside—what a different humanity is there! "I knew him not".

THE LORD JESUS A MAN OF
MUCH PRAYER

"Jesus . . . having been baptized, and praying" (Luke iii. 21). I am glad Luke put that in there—"and praying". What is prayer? Prayer has many aspects, but I suppose the one which stands out most clearly and governs all other prayer is supplication. It is the act and attitude of a suppliant asking. Here He has become so truly one with us in our humanity as to be in our place of suppliants—that is, altogether dependent upon God. People who are most conscious of their need, and most

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dependent, are the most prayerful people. People who are most self-sufficient are the most prayerless people. The Lord Jesus was a man of much prayer, and He started here in His public life—"and praying".

You see the features of a man according to God's mind. And if *we* are really born from above, if we have really apprehended the meaning of passing from one relationship to the other, if it is true that we are in Christ, these will be the features which characterize us. We can tell the measure of our life in Christ by our humility, our meekness, by our readiness and willingness to come right down and have no reputation, by our prayerfulness expressive of our dependence. This is the man expressed, not only in the individual, but corporately—by companies representing the whole Church, of which we were speaking earlier in this series. If they have any measure of Christ, they will be very humble people, not at all self-important. They will be consciously very dependent upon the Lord, and therefore very prayerful people.

HEAVEN OPENED TO CHRIST AFTER HIS BAPTISM

We have seen the baptism of Jesus and its meaning, giving the significance to Him as Son of Man. Then came the open heaven. The heaven was opened, showing us the kind of man who inherits the open heaven, the face of God, the recognition and acknowledgment of God. This is the kind of man—the man who has died, the man who has been buried, the man who has risen again on the other side. That is the man of the open heaven.

And then there was the Spirit as in the form of a dove coming and resting upon Him. The Holy Spirit is not given primarily as power to make us something. Oh, how we clamour for power, and therefore crave for the baptism of the Holy Spirit in order that we may have power—meaning that we may be a success, that our work may be a success. The Holy Spirit is really given to us because we shall never get on at all without Him. In our union with the Man who went down into death, declaring man's hopeless condition, we are, as He was, utterly dependent upon a power that is not in ourselves and of ourselves. That is the meaning of the gift, or the baptism, of the Holy Spirit.

A NEW POSITION TESTED

If that wants proving, the next step proves it. Before it can be said, "And Jesus returned in the

power of the Spirit", and began to preach effectively, it has to be said that in the Spirit He went into the wilderness to have the whole of His new position tested.

I wish Christians recognised the meaning of this wilderness interlude. 'Receive the Holy Spirit and then go and get on with it—begin to-day!'? Oh no! Receive the Holy Spirit, and then have the whole basis of your life in God put to the test and proved, and *then* go and get on with the work—but not until then. It works like that in principle, even if it does not seem to be like that. The Lord keeps to His law. The baptism of the Spirit was to be the basis of His new life—it was to be entire dependence upon God. I am not away from the Scriptures over this, for He depended upon the Holy Spirit for everything from this time onwards. "If I by the Spirit of God cast out demons . . ." (Matt. xii, 28). Everything was by the Spirit. We will not stay to prove that.

So this next step—the temptation in the wilderness—was basically a testing as to the position taken by Him and as to what that position involved. We can never take a position with God and not be severely tested as to the position we have taken. He had taken a position, He had come over to occupy certain ground, and now He was going to be tested as to that new position.

AN ASSAULT UPON FAITH

First of all, it was the ground of the relationship with God that had been declared in His baptism, in His figurative resurrection. "Thou art my beloved Son" (Mark i, 11). That is a relationship with God declared. Now then: "If thou art the Son . . ." You see the question projected in relation to the ground of His relationship with God, the subtlety of this 'if'—"If thou art the Son". The subtlety of it was of this kind: 'Do something about it—prove it by doing something!' You see the subtlety. Supposing your greatest friend said something to you of assurance, and then someone came along and said, 'Well, you had better prove that by doing something!' Where is your friend? What is your relationship to your friend? You have not fully trusted him, you really have not accepted his word, if you are going to put it to the test in some way. So the subtlety of the serpent in the 'if' was: 'Do something about it, prove it—put it to the proof and do something about it!' To do something about it is to accept a question in it.

But the man of the open heaven will stand on

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this ground: 'God has said it, and that is enough. No proof is called for; God has said it. "It is written . . ." That is the man who has the open heaven: the man who, even when circumstances and conditions are very difficult and adverse (for God's Word stands related to trial, to affliction, to adversity)—the man who stands firmly on the declaration: 'God has said I shall not perish; God has said I shall not die; God has said, and God is faithful'. That is not easy. Do not think that this was just play-acting. This was a terrible ordeal through which the Son of Man went. It was the very devil in person. The mere proximity of evil spirits is bad enough—quite enough to bring your spirit under, to make you feel terrible; but to have the very devil himself, in person, making direct assault upon you, under the most trying conditions of physical and mental exhaustion—what do we know about that? It was very real. But, in the reality of it, this Son of Man, for the sake of a whole race that was to come—His seed—took this position: 'God has said—that is enough!' It is upon basic faith that the assault is made; upon the faith that is basic to everything which is to follow.

THE BASIS OF THE TEMPTATION

So we find that His mission is immediately in view. "He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and he entered . . . into the synagogue on the Sabbath day" (Luke iv. 16), and the roll was delivered to Him, and He opened it at Isaiah lxi, and began to read: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach . . ." And then the subjects of His preaching, the message, His work, His mission, His proclamation, His utterance, were all here in view, and Satan was out to destroy that ministry, that mission, to destroy that utterance, that proclamation, and to silence Him.

Now, if you look back to the first chapter of this Gospel by Luke, you have a wonderful parable and example of this very thing. You have the story of the announcement to the father of John the Baptist, the announcement of his birth. Zacharias, the priest, a man holding a high and influential position, is representative of the nation, the priestly nation; the whole nation is embodied in Zacharias. The angel Gabriel came and spoke of the birth of John the Baptist, which was a natural impossibility. We will not stay with all the details, but the upshot was that Zacharias handed back the question to Gabriel: 'How shall this be? I

am an old man, my wife is old—how shall this be?' It was a doubt. Now see the force of the reply of Gabriel: "I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God". 'Do you know who you are talking to, questioning? You are challenging the very authority of heaven, the very ability of heaven to do as it will'. This was an act of unbelief in the face of heaven and heaven's highest messenger. "I am Gabriel": it was a severe rebuke. 'Now then, Zacharias, it will be, but this shall be a sign—for a season you will be dumb, not able to speak; your ministry will be suspended through unbelief'. And he was a type of the whole nation, Israel has lost its ministry and its message to the world for the whole of this dispensation. Israel is dumb as the messenger of God to the nations throughout this whole dispensation. It has nothing to say to the world from God. Why? Because of its unbelief.

Now Satan was working on that line, on that principle, with the Son of Man. If only he could get Him to entertain a doubt as to this Sonship, as to the Father's expressed attestation—"Thou art my beloved Son"; if he could get Him to entertain a doubt, by doing something to try and prove it; then he had silenced Him, robbed Him of His ministry. You know quite well that you have no power in ministry, whatever you may say, if there is a question in your heart, if there is not a complete faith in God in your heart. If Satan can bring in any unbelief, any question about God, your ministry is crippled. Satan was after this great ministry—"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach . . ." That is the basis of the temptation.

THE FORM OF THE TEMPTATION

The form of the temptation was threefold. Whether you take it in Luke's order or Matthew's, it does not matter. I prefer to take it in the order in Matthew. I will do that now simply because I think it is the spiritual order. That is no aspersion upon Luke. He had his own way of writing for his own purpose. He was recording just facts as he collected them.

(I) AN ATTACK UPON HIS BODY

First of all, the assault was made upon His body, and the question which arose in principle—I am not going to stay with it, I just mention it and pass on—the question which arose in principle was: Was this Man ready to present His body "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God"? Was He

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prepared for His body to be utterly at God's disposal, and not held for His own personal interest, benefit, convenience? That is why Paul says, "I beseech you . . . , brethren, . . . to present your bodies . . ." (Rom. xii. 1). The devil has a great desire to get hold of our bodies. They are our media for expressing what is inside. If he can capture the medium he has captured a lot. You know all that comes later on by interpretation of the Holy Spirit. "Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (I Cor. iii. 16). "Present your bodies." It was an attack upon His body, to get Him to let in unbelief and doubt and fear because of the physical consequences of the course that He was taking. That carries very much with it.

(II) AN ATTACK UPON HIS SOUL

In the next place, in Matthew's order, it was an attack upon His soul. The devil took Him to the pinnacle of the temple and said, "Cast yourself down"; and, trying to enforce or reinforce his temptation, he even comes over to Christ's ground—"It is written". Christ has said that; Satan is trying to capture the situation by using the enemy's means, the enemy's ground. "Cast yourself down." What is this? Well—"Do something to realise your ambition in a quick way. You have come to get a following, you have come to win men, you have come on a mission: now then, secure the success of your mission, get this following by doing something wonderful, something miraculous! Nothing will happen to you: you will come down from the pinnacle safely, whereas anyone else would be dashed to pieces!" 'Here is a quick way to success. Realise your ambitions by some expediency, by some policy'.

Oh, the curse of policy in the world! 'Is it politic? Will it get success? Will this expedient achieve our end quickly?' That is the soul of the fallen man, the soul of the old Adam. We are all there. This is not something subjective. This is true of us all in Adam. We do not like the long-drawn-out road of patient waiting to see God vindicating, while everything is against us, the road which seems to have no turning. Trust in God? Oh, let us do something to accelerate! It is said of Philip Brooks of Boston that he was walking up and down his study one day, seeming very heavy and perplexed. A friend came in and asked, 'What is the matter?' 'Oh', said Brooks, 'I am in a hurry and God isn't!' Do something to make God come into your stride!—that is the soul, and it really is crucifixion to the soul to refuse anything and everything like that.

(III) AN ATTACK UPON HIS SPIRIT

And then the attack upon His spirit. "If thou wilt . . . worship me." "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (John iv. 24). When we come to worship, that which comes forth from our spirit is a spiritual thing. So, through the body and through the soul, the enemy was seeking to strike at the innermost man in his relationship with God in spirit, because it is by spirit that we are joined to the Lord. "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (I Cor. vi. 17). Satan's thought is: 'Oh, to cut in there!' That is the form of the temptation.

THE VICTORY

Just a word as to the victory. The victory of the Son of Man was threefold: over the flesh, over the world, over the devil—a threefold victory through faith, maintained faith, stolid faith under the most trying and adverse conditions. This is the man that has the opened heaven; this is the man who has the face of God. This is the Spirit of Sonship. This is the order of mankind that God has set His heart upon; this is the kind that Jesus Christ has come to beget through the travail of His soul.

WHAT OUR BAPTISM MEANS

Finally, the application. It was by His baptism that He effected it all, that He took the ground and held it and secured it before God right through. It was through His baptism that He was attested, accredited and established as the Son, as God's representative Man, as "the firstborn among many brethren". But then we may open the later New Testament, and on the day of Pentecost we hear the Apostle crying, "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you" (Acts ii. 38). I am not going to give an exposition on the subject of baptism, but I want to say this, that our baptism is our means of declaring that we stand on the ground of this Man. We have died to one manhood, one mankind; we have ceased, voluntarily, to have a life in that relationship. In our innermost being a severance has taken place, a circumcision inwardly of the heart has taken place, and we have passed out from all that, by way of a grave; and now we occupy, in Christ risen, the ground of another order, another man, another kind; we are alive unto God.

That is what we mean when we are baptized. We have said, earlier, that baptism as an ordinance effects nothing: but baptism is the New Testament means given for declaring a fact which exists, and

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the poignant point of this is that every man and woman of Adam has been baptized, all the sinners in the world to-day have been baptized. I do not mean that they have gone into a baptismal pool or been sprinkled. I mean that, in the baptism—the death—of Christ, the whole world was taken and given the chance of a new relationship, had it provided for them, carried out for them, effected on their behalf; and if every man and woman in the whole creation is lost, it will not be because they were not redeemed, but because they have not accepted their redemption, they have not taken the place which Christ has secured for them. Our invitation, our call, our beseeching, our entreaty, is that men will come into the thing which God has done for them in Christ. They are there, but they have to declare that they are there before it is made good for them. Our baptism is the testimony to the fact that we are on this ground of the new man, and that, accordingly, heaven is open for us, the face of God is turned toward us in Christ—a new creation, “accepted in the beloved” (Eph. i. 6), on the ground of this heavenly Man.

That is the significance of Christ. Oh, if you

have gone that way, if you have given that testimony, keep the meaning ever in view. I so often meet Christians who have at some time borne that testimony: they have had it explained, they have accepted and believed it, and have been baptized; but oh, how they are living to the old man, how they are influenced and actuated by the old man's interests, how their soul is still mastered by worldly ambitions! I often feel like asking: Were you baptized? What did you mean? Have you really apprehended your death in Christ's death? Have you apprehended the meaning of the other side—that you are alive unto God, and only alive unto God, and you have no life other than unto God? Have you? I am not surprised if you are not enjoying the open heaven, the face of God, the glorious presence and power of the Holy Spirit, victory over Satan, over the world, over the self-life. You have got to keep this ever as a living reality before you.

May the Lord Himself put His seal to this word, by making us men and women after this kind, even according to Christ.

T. A-S.

“A GREAT WARFARE”

STUDIES IN BUNYAN'S “HOLY WAR” I

INTRODUCTION

THE “great warfare” of which Daniel writes (Dan. x. 1) is an eternal warfare. It did not begin with Daniel, nor did it end with him. The Bible discloses that this war began before man was found on the earth, and long before man became involved in it; and every true child of God knows that the war is still going on, and that he is involved in a great conflict. We know so well, do we not, that the more truly we are set to go on with the Lord, the more our lives become a veritable battlefield, and the more we seek to co-operate with Him in the working out of His purposes in the world, the more we realise that we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against a vast régime of evil which is determined to destroy man and rob God of His heart's desire in man's creation. It is indeed a *great warfare*, and are we not discovering that as the Day of the Lord's Triumph draws nearer, the battle is getting more intense and the malignity and ferocity of the enemy more apparent? It is only too true. There is nothing theoretical about this war. The world in which we

live, the situation among the Lord's own people, and the experience of our own hearts and lives provide an abundance of evidence that we are involved in a conflict in which ‘the powers of heaven and hell engage for more than death or life’.

But of Daniel it is written that “he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision” (Dan. x. 1). How important it is for us to be alive to the issues at stake in this war, to understand what it is all about, to be awake to the strategy of the enemy—“the wiles of the devil”, as Paul writes (Eph. vi. 11)—, and most of all to know our God and Captain, with all the heavenly resources, forces and weapons that are His, so that we may stand fast in the evil day and be strong and do exploits under His command. If we are to march on continually in the train of His triumph, then we must be those who are instructed, trained and equipped for the battle. It is not enough that our Captain has triumphed gloriously. By the Holy Spirit we must be brought ourselves into the power of His victory. The Lord wants us *with Him* in the battle. We shall be spectators at our peril. This

is no time for spiritual laxity. Let us put on the whole armour of God that we may be able to stand with Him in this 'Holy War'.

It is with this sense of the urgency of the hour and the up-to-dateness of this issue, that we turn to John Bunyan's great allegory, *The Holy War*. Ours is no mere academic interest in a book or theme, but here we shall find a wealth of value and instruction in the art of spiritual warfare. Bunyan was a true soldier of the Cross, and he writes *out of his heart and experience*. He does not write about a subject: his subject is in his heart and history. He knew the terrible power of the enemy and the greater power of the Lord in his own experience. He learnt the art of holy warfare in the heat of the battle, not in the privacy of his study! Here in his book we have the spoils that he has gathered from the battlefield of his own experience. It is ever that way, is it not? We can only give what we have gained. John Bunyan is, of course, a classic example and embodiment of a great principle, that value comes by the way of suffering *surmounted*, that spoil for the Lord and His people comes from battles *fought through* to victory. The Lord can and will turn the darkest experiences to account, if we will only trust Him. How much turns upon the attitude of our hearts! How easily Bunyan could have been submerged by his sufferings, if he had allowed himself to pity himself and to doubt the Lord. The long years of imprisonment might have driven him to despair and bitterness, but he believed God in spite of it all, and God made him fruitful in the land of his affliction. His was a *resolute spirit*. The steadfastness of Christ was in him, with the result that the spoils he gathered by living in the victory of Christ are with us to this day. God is faithful; no servant of His suffers in vain.

The Holy War was written between the two parts of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which in itself is significant, for holy warfare is an integral part of a pilgrim's progress! Our own spiritual progress and the advancement of the Lord's interests on the earth have to be fought for. If we are having an easy time, it is doubtful whether we are making any progress. Every inch of progress in the Christian life is contested by the enemy, in one way or another. He has many ways of arresting our progress, as we shall see presently. The point is that, while our lives are not to resound solely with the clash of arms, for the Lord is not only the Lord of Hosts but the God of Peace, we are as a matter of hard fact involved in the titanic conflict between "the authority of darkness" and "the kingdom

of the Son of God's love" (Colossians i. 13).

The Holy War never has been nor ever will be as popular as *The Pilgrim's Progress*. There is an appeal, a romantic element about the latter, which has made it a popular classic even with the world! The onward march of this great story to some extent obscures the deep spiritual values beneath the surface, so that the worldly mind manages to enjoy the story and at the same time to avoid very largely the spiritual challenge. Not so *The Holy War*. This book is too directly spiritual. It has no appeal whatever for the natural man. While not so readable as *The Pilgrim's Progress*, it is surely its equal as to spiritual value. In many ways these two great allegories are complementary, the one generally viewing the Christian life *objectively*, the other *subjectively*; the one picturing it as a journey from one world to another, the other portraying it as a war between two contending empires in which MAN is the longed-for prize.

AN OUTLINE OF THE STORY

There is, of course, no substitute for a reading and re-reading of the book itself, but it will help us to have an outline of the story before us.

(i) We learn from Bunyan first of all that two great kingdoms are at war. Over the one reigus the King Shaddai, over the other the Giant Diabolus. The greatest prize in this war is then seen to be the famous Town of Mansoul, built by Shaddai for his own delight, and that he might give it to His Son, the Prince Emmanuel. This Town of Mansoul, a picture of mankind as a whole and also of every man, is sought, deceived and captured by Diabolus, who proceeds to make it at every point the opposite of what it was, and to strengthen it against its former King. Terrible indeed is the picture that Bunyan draws of the condition of fallen humanity, of man by nature.

(ii) But heaven has foreseen everything. The King and His Son have already sufficiently provided for the relief of Mansoul. The Father and the Son in the secrecy of the Privy-chamber have already covenanted together and laid the foundations of redemption. Heaven now marches upon Mansoul, in the persons of the four Captains of Shaddai and their men. The Town rocks beneath the hammer blows of these Captains, and there is mutiny within; but the enemy keeps his prize, for the Law, good and holy though it is, is impotent to rescue man.

(iii) The four Captains appeal to the Court in Heaven, and Emmanuel then takes the field

accompanied by five further Captains, Grace and Righteousness now besiege the Town together. The power of Emmanuel's sword prevails, and Diabolus is stripped of his power and cast out. Not until Mansoul has learnt the horror of its complicity with Diabolus does Emmanuel allow His grace to shine forth upon the Town. Thus the Town is *truly* won to His allegiance and Emmanuel takes possession of the Castle (the heart). Emmanuel now reconstructs and fortifies the Town, sets its *true* inhabitants in their places, and by the Cross provides for the destruction of the allies of Diabolus (the 'Diabolonians') who still lurk in and about the walls of the Town (the flesh). Blessings now abound in the Town. Mansoul receives her large charter of salvation; the Lord Chief Secretary of the Father's house (the Holy Spirit) takes up His blessed Office in the Town; Mr. God's Peace presides over all; in the persons of the Captains the energies of heaven are present; the Town is adorned with Emmanuel's livery, and the image of Shaddai and that of His Son are seen more fairly drawn than ever upon the Castle gates.

(iv) But there is a man in Mansoul called Mr. Carnal-Security (Paul calls him 'Confidence in the flesh'), and he brings the Town into fearful bondage again. Emmanuel is offended and withdraws from the Town; the Lord Chief Secretary is ill at ease while still remaining there; Mr. God's Peace lays down his commission; the heavenly Captains are weakened and a great sickness afflicts the townsmen; the lurking Diabolonians within the Town and the powers of hell without are encouraged to plot the ruin of Mansoul. First Mr. Godly-Fear and later Mr. Prywell rouse the Town to its condition and peril, so that when Diabolus returns with his great Army of Doubters, the Town is prepared of offer stout resistance. Mansoul now reaps the bitter consequences of its backsliding. The battle sways to and fro. Mansoul makes a foolish sortie upon the enemy, which gives the latter the opportunity of overrunning the Town, *but* the Castle holds out.

(v) Mansoul's stout resistance draws out the help of the Lord Chief Secretary, who sets His hand to a Petition which is carried to Emmanuel by Captain Credence (faith). While the plottings of Diabolus continue, Emmanuel is on His way, and soon the enemy is crushed between His forces and those of Mansoul under the command of Captain Credence. The final scenes tell of Mansoul's restored joy, the last vain onslaught of Diabolus, the hunting down of certain Diabolon-

ian traitors within the Town, and of how Emmanuel opened His heart to his beloved Mansoul: -

'My design . . . is to make thee meet for my Father's Presence, Blessing, and Glory; for thou, my Mansoul, art created to be prepared unto these. O my Mansoul, how have I set my Heart, my Love upon thee!'

This is, of course, but the briefest of outlines, but it suffices to indicate the range of this great story. Here indeed is a veritable gold-mine!

THE GREAT BACKGROUND TO THE HOLY WAR

In a war of this magnitude, as one would expect, there are many phases. There are local skirmishes as well as major battles; temporary tactics are to be seen, as well as an overall strategy; different generals and armies are employed at different times. But we must not allow the details of the campaign to obscure the great background of the war. How necessary and how helpful it is to see our own battles in their true setting. Our own every-day battles are not just our personal affair, they are part of the great war. We must learn to see our little lives (as they seem) in their true setting. Every detail of our lives is significant, and takes its significance from the great issues that are at stake. How often the issue of the day, we might say the issue of the whole war, has depended on some small, apparently trivial factor. Achan was the key to a big situation. Jonathan's more or less private victory over the Philistines was the key to a far greater triumph of the people of God over their foes (I Sam. xiv).

The issues that are at stake in this war are these. Firstly, the Father's honour must be vindicated: for, as Bunyan puts it, the enemy "has put the lie upon God", he has gained Mansoul by making insinuations as to the character of God, and Emmanuel comes to vindicate His Father. Further, the Son's inheritance must be recovered from the Usurper. By every right Mansoul belongs to the Son. Heaven is warring to secure His rightful inheritance. Then again, there is a great purpose to be realised in Mansoul. There is an unspeakably great purpose in the heart of God which He is longing to fulfil in and through MAN.

These are great issues, you will agree. Consider these excerpts: -

"As to the situation of this Town, it lieth just between the two worlds; and one Shaddai built it for his own delight. He made it the mirrour and

glory of all that he made ; even the Top-piece, beyond anything else that he did in that country. And as he made it goodly to behold, so also mighty to have Dominion over all the country round about.”

“ There was reared up in the midst of this Town a most famous and stately Palace ; for strength, it might be called a *Castle* ; for pleasantness, a *Paradise* ; for largeness, a place so copious as to contain all the world. This place the King Shaddai intended but for himself *alone*, and not another with him.”

“ Well, upon a time there was one Diabolus, a mighty Giant, made an assault upon this famous Town of Mansoul, to take it, and make it his own habitation. As to his Original he was at first one of the servants of King Shaddai. He was made *Son of the morning*, and a brave place he had of it.

“ Well, he seeing himself thus exalted to greatness and honour, and raging in his mind for higher state and degree, what doth he but begins to think with himself how he might be set up as Lord over all, and have the sole power under Shaddai. (Now *that* did the King reserve for His Son, yea, and had already bestowed it upon him.) Wherefore . . . he breaks his mind to some other of his companions . . . and they came to this issue, that they should make an attempt upon the King's Son to destroy him, that the Inheritance might be theirs. Now the King and his Son being All and always *Eye* . . . take them in the very *Nick* and first *Trip* . . . and cast them altogether out.

“ Now they being cast out . . . and considering that that Town (Mansoul) was one of the chief works and delights of King Shaddai, what do they but, after Counsel taken, make an assault upon that . . . saying, *Now we have found the prize, and how to be revenged on King Shaddai for what he hath done to us*. So they sat down and called a Council of War”.

Note too Emmanuel's controversy with Diabolus over Mansoul —

“ Oh, thou great Emmanuel . . . wherefore art thou come . . . to cast me out of my possession! ? This Town of Mansoul . . . is mine . . . by right of conquest ; I won it in the open field. It is mine also by their subjection. Moreover, this Town . . . hath disavowed thee. Leave me to my just Inheritance peaceably.”

“ When this pretended King had made an end . . . Emmanuel . . . spake, Thou deceiving one . . . thou pretendest a right, a lawful right, to the

deplorable Town of Mansoul, when it is most apparent to all my Father's Court that the entrance which thou hast obtained in at the Gates of Mansoul was through thy lie and falsehood. Thou didst put the lie upon my Father, and madest him (to Mansoul) the greatest Deluder in the world. I am therefore come to avenge the wrong that thou hast done to my Father.

“ This Town of Mansoul is my Father's. My Father built and did fashion it with his hand.

“ This Town of Mansoul is mine, for that I am my Father's Heir, his First-born, and the only Delight of his Heart. I have a right and title to Mansoul . . . also by my Father's donation. His it was, and he gave it me.

“ Mansoul is mine by Right of Purchase. I gave Body for body, Soul for soul, Life for life, Blood for blood, and so redeemed my beloved Mansoul.

“ My Father's Law and Justice . . . are both now satisfied. Nor am I come out this day against thee, but by commandment of my Father. I am not come . . . without my Father.”

These brief extracts indicate the scope of the story, the great background against which the war is fought out. And what is the hard-fought-for prize?

THE PRIZE IS MAN

If only we saw more clearly what is in the heart of God for MAN “ *in Christ* ”, it would have a transforming effect on our lives. Man himself is the longed-for prize ; every man, every one of us. God is set upon having “ one new man ” in His Son (Eph. ii. 15). The Church is a new *humanity*, a new creation. The Son of Man has revealed the meaning of *man-hood*. God is after people like His Son, real people in absolute fellowship with Him. *This* is what Satan is contesting. He is saying in effect: ‘ God shall not have what His heart is set on in MAN. I will wreck His purpose. Man is destined to govern the whole universe, under God, in union with God's Son, the Heir of all things ; man is destined to take my place. Very well, I will fight to the bitter end to avert this.’

This, then, is the issue being fought out every day in our lives—in every detail of our lives and in our life together. The Lord give us to see the significance of our lives, the meaning of our union with Christ, and to be *wholly on His side* in this great warfare.

T. L. M.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

THE RECOVERING OF THE LORD'S TESTIMONY IN FULNESS

III THE FUNDAMENTAL MATTER OF WORSHIP

WE are occupied with what is represented by a clause in a statement made by Nehemiah when, being invited by his enemies, in their subtlety, to come and meet them in some place apart, in order to ensnare him, he said: "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down". We are shortening that statement to "a great work": for this book of Nehemiah sets forth, in figure, in historic illustration, the great work of God. Nehemiah, as we have seen right at the beginning of the book, says that he disclosed to no one what God had put in his heart to do. Later he did disclose it, but this great work to which he refers was something that God had laid upon his heart.

Before we proceed with this matter of the rebuilding of the wall of testimony, I want to put in here a very important and inclusive parenthesis—not based upon any particular clause or text, but upon that which pervades and underlies the whole: that is, *worship*.

For, when we come to think about it, Jerusalem, defined by its wall, just speaks inclusively and comprehensively of the matter of worship. Indeed, Jerusalem's very existence was for that purpose. Babylon, as we saw earlier, was the seat and centre of false worship, idolatry, something that was not of God. Jerusalem always stands over against Babylon in the Bible as the opposite of that. It stands for the worship of God; it is the place of God's worship. So this wall of Jerusalem is a figure of that which encompasses the worship of God, and is in itself a figure of worship. Worship is the first thing in the whole history of relationship with God, and worship is the last thing. We find reference made in the Bible to worship going on before the world was, before the creation was undertaken—the "sons of God" occupied with worshipping Him before the foundation of the world. Who those sons of God were we do not know, but there is the statement. They sang together for joy, they worshipped the Lord. It was there, it was happening.

Then worship comes in as the governing factor in the Creation. As we know, it was a breakdown in worship which was the basic sin of Adam: then, when that matter has been upset here in this earth, God institutes the whole course of worship during the ages and maintains a testimony to Himself. One of the last things we have in the Bible is this

universal worship of Him. And Jerusalem was, I repeat, so far as type and figure and historic illustration are concerned, the Lord's earthly seat of worship—of the maintenance of worship unto Himself. We are carried in the New Testament and in this dispensation from the earthly to the heavenly, we are come to "the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to . . . the church of the firstborn" (Heb. xii. 22-23); and it is worship. It is worship re-established in heaven.

WORSHIP IS REDEMPTION UNTO GOD

So we look at this matter of worship for a few minutes. We are seeing that Nehemiah's work was the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem, and really it was a redemptive work—the work of redeeming the situation, redeeming the testimony. It was a work of redemption. Now, we know quite well that redemption is unto God. "Hast redeemed us to God" (Rev. 9, A.V.)—that is the phrase. And worship just simply means that—everything redeemed unto God, brought back to God, recovered for God; and that mighty work of redemption is still operating—in this sense, that it is against a certain natural trend and course of things which has come into the creation through what happened between Satan and Adam. Redemption is recovering from a certain trend. The trend of the creation now is *always* downward. In every part of the creation, the natural course is downward. You are contending with that in some way or another every day. Anybody who has a garden knows that it is a constant day-by-day work of redemption from a downward tendency. Any doctor or nurse is day by day contending with the downward course of physical life. Unless the body is looked after, unless there is a 'counter operation' brought in, the course is naturally downward, there is deterioration; and so the medical profession are in their realm occupied with redemption. And so we might go on into every realm, because everywhere and in everything that is the natural way—decline.

And if that is true in the natural creation, the physical creation, how true it is in the spiritual. The Bible is one comprehensive revelation of the fact that, unless there is a counter power brought in from heaven, everything goes down. Again and

again and yet again, in the Bible, we find these movements downward taking place—decline, degeneration, and God reacting to redeem from that course, to redeem unto Himself. Worship, then, means the redemption of everything unto God, giving the significance of God to things.

WORSHIP A MATTER OF MOTIVE

Let us think for a moment of the rudimentary element in worship, leaving religion aside for the moment. Worship goes on altogether apart from any religious system or form. It is there in the very constitution. What is worship in its elementary principle? Well, it is just the element of *motive* in life—that is, worthwhileness to live, it being worth while to live. The very lowest, the very saddest and most tragic state to which anyone can come is to have lost all interest in life, to be saying, 'There is nothing now for which to live, I have nothing to live for'. You could not get lower than that. Life has been given up; life holds nothing worth while. That *worthwhileness* is the principle of worship. It is a motive for living, something for which to live, and that is present in all the world, except in those tragic realms where people have already given up life because they have no more interest and no more motive. I say that is the saddest and the most terrible thing that can ever come to anyone. Except where that obtains, worship is just this, that there is something to live for, that there is something worth while in being alive. That is the *principle* of worship.

Now you carry that into a much larger and higher realm. What is there to live for? What is the greatest thing for which to live? And there you bring worship into its right realm, and worship becomes this—'Why, the greatest thing to justify life and to give meaning and value and worthwhileness to life is the Lord!' Not this world, as something to be worshipped, nor its kingdoms, not its princes or its god; but the Lord being worthy, the the most worth-while object in life, having all the worthwhileness of our very being and existence: so that He holds the full place, the central place; the Lord is the object always in view.

Worship is not going to some ecclesiastical building week by week, perhaps once or twice, to attend what is called Divine worship. That is not worship. That may be just empty form; that may be patronising God. It may be anything short of the reality. Worship is a life thing, not a weekly thing; certainly not once a quarter at the 'quarterly communion', or on the great feast days of the

Church—Easter, Christmas and so on. Worship is this, that *life* is for the Lord. Every moment, every hour, every day, every week and every year—it is all for the Lord. That is worship. Our first thought in the morning is the Lord, and our last thought at night is the Lord; and although there are many occupations of mind and hand during the hours of the day, there is something behind the one who has been redeemed unto God that is always reaching out to Him.

The lives of such are the prayer of worship. They are not always putting it into language and phrases, and they are not always on their knees, and they are not always in meetings; but from behind them, so to speak, there is that which is reaching out to the Lord—they long for the Lord. It is true of them, as it was true of those in Israel in the days of Jerusalem's glory, though they were far from Jerusalem, that they long for Jerusalem. 'Oh, to be there, the place of the altar, the place of God, the place of worship!' There longings were there, and away they could never be satisfied. They expressed this true principle. When in Babylon they were taunted, this remnant whose heart was in Jerusalem—taunted by the Babylonians: "Sing us one of the songs of Zion" (Psa. cxxxvii. 3). 'Sing us one of your folk-songs of Jerusalem'. "Upon the willows . . . we hanged up our harps . . . How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" Their longing was to be there. They were drawn. We should understand that in a spiritual way. Our Jerusalem is no focal point on this earth, but there ought to be that about us which is always out to the Lord; which asks: 'How much more of the Lord can there be in our lives?'

If you read this book of Nehemiah in the light of that, it will be entirely revolutionised for you, marvellously illuminated. Nehemiah begins with this tremendous yearning for the Lord, away there in Babylon. He comes to Jerusalem and takes in the situation and deplors that this is not to the honour of the Lord, and he weeps and he prays and he sets to work and he draws others in, and he is not at rest until this thing is finished at all costs—a testimony to the Lord raised up in fulness, in completeness. It is all a spirit of worship; and the people who came in, of whose work we have yet to speak, they had a mind to work, they were of a willing spirit; but, you see, it was the spirit of worship. They, in their own way, were fulfilling what Paul says in his letter to the Romans: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual wor-

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ship" (Rom. xii. 1, A.R.V.). They were giving their bodies to this work, and it was spiritual worship in motive. Worship, then, springs out of a motive.

THE LORD DRAWS NEAR ON THE BASIS OF WORSHIP

Now that is just the divide point in the Bible. When God made man and brought him into fellowship with Himself, everything was for the Lord. Man had no other object in view for which to live and work than the Lord. It was a beautiful state of things. It was man and the Lord, and the Lord, it would seem, coming in the cool of the evening, walking in the garden to receive those whom He had made, and there was joy in their life and in their work. The Lord had pleasure in that. It is always shown in the Bible that the Lord has pleasure in, and draws near to, those who are in a state of worship. That is to say, the Lord's drawing near is on the ground that their heart is out to Himself. You never find the Lord drawing near when it is otherwise, unless it be in judgment. But when the Lord comes in blessing, in benediction, it is because there are hearts out to Himself, and if the Lord came there into the garden, as He is shown to have done, it was because there were hearts toward Him, because He found there that which satisfied Him. When the Lord Jesus was here it was like that. He loved to be where He found a heart open to Him, ready to receive Him, ready to answer to His desires. That is why He went to Bethany so often. There was a heart there for Him, for the Lord. There was a spirit of worship.

THE DEVIL'S DECEPTION OF MANKIND

But then there came the terrible break, and the enemy came into the garden to divert from God, to divert to himself. But how?—and this is a terrible thing to recognise. He brought man's own personal interests into view, man's own personal interests first, and showed him that he could have something—he could get something. Up to that point it was all that the Lord could get, and now the situation is that man can have something. The enemy was working in a deep and subtle way to draw away from God to himself; and so, getting man into alliance with himself, he deceived man into thinking that he was going to have the benefit, when all the time it was the devil who was going to have the benefit. That is the deception of man-

kind. He was turned from God to get something, a good time, this world, and all that, and in the end he finds he has been duped, and the devil has got it all—and him into the bargain. That is the tragedy and the deception. But you see the point: it was in order to draw away from God by this self-interest, this self-ishness—and that broke the worship. From that time it has been like that. The world is a selfish world, a world that draws to itself, that does not give God His place, does not let Him have everything, first and last. That is how things are.

But now God wants His spiritual Jerusalem: He wants that recovered where everything, voluntarily and gladly—delightingly—is for the Lord; a people who delight in the Lord. Our Lord Jesus was the embodiment of this principle. "I delight to do thy will, O my God" (Psa. xl. 8). His delight was in the Lord. He is the true embodiment of the spirit of the heavenly Jerusalem, where everything, not under constraint but wholeheartedly, is unto the Lord.

A DIVIDED HEART

Now you look at this wall in its ruin, in its brokenness, as we are doing at this time, and you say again, 'Why this state of things? why this picture of tragedy? What is come to pass that everyone seeing it wags the head or heaves a sigh? What has happened that that which was once so glorious has come to this? Why is it?' And the answer is: 'Their worship went away from the Lord; the very thing for which Jerusalem existed, that is, to be wholly for the Lord, was broken into; they allowed other objects of worship to seize upon their hearts and lives'. Yes, the Lord was displeased, and therefore Jerusalem had no justification in continuing in the sight of God. God sees no reason why it should go on at all, and so He hands it over to destruction. It was not what it was meant to be.

And may that not be the explanation of a good deal of weakness—yes, in our lives, and in the Church as a whole, in that which bears the name of the Lord; defeat, brokenness, the absence of those signs that the Lord is present, those marks of the Lord's pleasure? May it not be that there is a dividedness of heart, a reservation in our lives? that there is, after all, somewhere deep down, some self-principle at work? May it not be that? I am not judging, but I do know the deception of these hearts of ours. They are indeed "deceitful above all things" (Jer. xvii. 9). Very often, when

we think that what we are doing is for the Lord, we are having a good deal of pleasure in it ourselves, and if in the service of the Lord the element of personal pleasure is withheld or covered, we have a very bad time—after all, it is somehow or other for ourselves. Yes, it is like that. We do not want to be too introspective, but you see what I mean. The Lord looks on the heart, and when He really sees that the heart is wholly toward Him, that there is no mixture, no other god, no other interest, then the Lord commits Himself to that life, to that Jerusalem. The Lord commits Himself where it is wholly for Him. That is worship.

Now you see, the ground of Satan's detracting and diverting from God is this wretched self-life in one or other of its numerous forms. Over against that, *God's* ground, where He encamps, where He commits Himself, is the ground of Himself alone. God commits Himself to Himself, and to no one else. If the Lord is here, if the Lord has His place fully and wholly, utterly, if it is all for the Lord, the Lord will commit Himself to that ground; not to our ground and certainly not to Satan's ground; but to Himself. If it is for Himself, then He will be for Himself, and we all agree that that is perfectly safe and anything else would not be safe at all. The Lord is the only safe ground upon which He Himself can work and be present.

A DISPOSITION FOR THE LORD

Now, with just one little further word about this motive, I will close. The Apostle, in that great word on worship in Romans xii. 1-2, follows on—and we must not stop short half-way through the statement, we must watch the conjunction as he goes on—“ . . . which is your spiritual worship. And be not fashioned according to this age: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind ”—the ‘making anew’ of your mind. A ‘mindedness’ is the principle and motive of worship. What are we disposed to? Is our whole disposition for the Lord, all our ‘disposedness’ unto the Lord? “Be . . . transformed by the renewing of your mind”—your mindedness, your inclination, your disposition—unto a new disposition, altogether different from that which came in with Adam in what we call the Fall.

Thank God for this; it is true. It is more true, perhaps, than we often realise or recognise. I think that very often we are troubled and bothered about something that is not true as to ourselves. We are thinking untruths about ourselves. Of

course, we know our proneness to sin, we know the evil that is in our flesh, we know how wicked we are and how unworthy, and all that; but then we allow that to go too far. I ask you this: with all our unworthiness, all our sinfulness, all that is evil in our flesh, have we not a heart for the Lord after all? We feel we blunder, we err—yes, but we have a heart for the Lord. Where did that come from? There was a time when we had no heart for the Lord, when we had no disposition, no tendency, that way; we were not inclined after the Lord. But something has happened in us deeper and stronger than all our weaknesses and our waywardness and our faults and our follies and our sins. There is a reaction that rises up every time we make a mistake, and sends us back to the Lord in grief, in sorrow, in disappointment, in longing, and we are not happy again until we have found the Lord.

Where does that disposition come from? It is something done by Him. That is the basis of worship; that is the ground upon which the Lord will get everything. So do not let us be discouraged by ourselves too much. You will never think that I am saying that we are to condone our sinfulness and our foolishness and to give place to them; but it is a glorious fact that, while all this is true, and Satan can tell us so much about ourselves that is bad, nevertheless we can reply in the words of the hymn:

“ I know it all, and thousands more:
Jehovah findeth none ”.

We can come back against all accusation and say, ‘ Nevertheless God has done something in me that has set my heart toward Him. With all my failures, my heart is toward Him. With all my breakdowns, I am for the Lord ’. And so we go on. This spirit, this law of worship, consumes and consumes, and we find at last in His presence that there is nothing else left but Himself, just Himself.

That is a simple word, but that after all underlies all that is here about Jerusalem. All that we shall have to say, or could say, as to the details of this matter of the rebuilding of the wall has its roots in the soil of worship. This Jerusalem is to be a praise in the earth; it is to speak of the glory of God. It is all to point toward the Lord. It is all to testify to His glory and honour. That is what Jerusalem exists for, and that is what we who are of the spiritual and heavenly Jerusalem exist for—to bring everything back to the Lord, to bring delight to His heart, and to constitute a testimony that He is satisfied.

T. A-S.

“LAST OF ALL ... TO ME”

Reading : 1 Corinthians xv. 3 - 8.

THE fact that Paul had seen the Risen Lord was not only the basis of his apostleship but the explanation of his whole life as a Christian. “He appeared to me also”: this, and this alone, was the explanation of the great change which had taken place in him. It was not a matter of argument or reasoning, of persuasions or threats; like others whom he listed as fellow-witnesses, Paul had had a personal encounter with Christ, and found that in the Risen Lord all his problems were solved and his needs satisfied.

At Corinth things were far from right. The saints there were not living in the good of spiritual power and deliverance as Paul was, and it seemed to the apostle that this unhappy state of affairs was due to the fact that the Corinthians were not on resurrection ground. They accepted the doctrine of Christ’s resurrection in a general way, but failed to realise how it affected them. They did not question that He was risen, but they had no expectation of sharing His resurrection life. They were trying to live for the Lord and serve Him on a pre-resurrection basis, that is, in the energy of the natural life. They were trying, yes—but they were failing hopelessly, as we always must fail until we emerge from the realm of what we are naturally into that sphere of new life into which we are introduced by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Resurrection life is for us all. In a sense Paul’s experience was unique, but for the purposes of his argument it was only put forward as his personal corroboration of what others claimed to be true of Christ. Paul’s faith was intensely personal; it was his own individual taste of what others affirmed to be the case. Peter, James, yes, and others too, based their new life and ministry on their identification with Christ in resurrection. Paul gratefully accepted their testimony, the cumulative effect of which made a massive argument for a vital doctrine; but he also knew for himself. “Last of all . . . to me also”. He, too, had passed from the confusion and chaos of life in the flesh to the new realm of the Spirit, and it was all the result of his coming to know Christ as risen from the dead. He longed that the Corinthians might share his knowledge. They might not have his actual vision, but they ought to enter into its spiritual meaning. The same is true of us to-day, and it is for this reason that we will now consider some of these witnesses

of the resurrection, with the implications of their experiences. His list is by no means complete, so that we shall consider others also, not mentioned in this chapter, who had a like experience with Peter and James.

I. MARY—A NEW LOVE

In I Corinthians xv Paul placed Cephas at the head of the list, though he doubtless knew that Mary Magdalene was really the first one to see the Lord. Perhaps for his purpose there was no need to mention her; nevertheless it was she who was first. Why was this? We might say that it was because she loved Him best, she was the most devoted; but equally we might say that it was because she needed Him most, for she was really broken-hearted. We are told that from her seven demons had been cast out (Mark xvi. 9), and as a result of this verse suppositions have been made that she had been a woman of evil life. There is nothing in Scripture to warrant this idea, but undoubtedly she was a woman who had known a mighty deliverance. The Lord met her when she was held in a dreadful grip by the devil, driven on in spite of herself by evil powers which kept her in bondage, and He released her by a mighty deliverance.

No wonder, then, that she loved Him and was ready to pour herself out in whole-hearted devotion. Her love was outstanding, but it was also powerless and full of despair. The most that she could hope for was His dead body. “Tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away” (John xx. 15). Of course this was physically impossible, but love never considers difficulties. She did not think of herself, of the cost or the consequences; she loved her Lord with an uttermost devotion. Now such a love is noble and beautiful, but apart from the resurrection it would have been futile, and indeed it had only brought her a broken heart. It was not as though Mary had set her love on an unworthy object, for it was the very Son of God to whom she was so passionately devoted. But even such love as hers proves vain and ineffective until it passes from the level of mere human strength into the new realm where death has been conquered.

This seems to have been the Lord’s meaning in telling her not to cling to Him. In her first moment of joy she wanted to hold Him fast, to have Him back on the old terms. That could never be, so the Lord commanded her, “Touch me not”, or,

better (according to the margin), "Take not hold on me" (John xx. 17). This is the more striking since we find that there were other women who met Him after His resurrection and "took hold of his feet, and worshipped him" (Matthew xxviii. 9). If they could do that, it seems strange that He should have made Mary, who loved Him so much, keep her distance.

Perhaps it was just because she did so love Him; she had now to learn the transition from the natural to the spiritual, from earthly love—however pure—to the love which could only be when He had ascended unto His Father. It seems most unlikely that this command was due to the fact that Mary had interrupted the Lord on His way from the tomb to the Father, as if in between His words to Mary and those to the women He had made a brief appearance in heaven. It is unthinkable that He would have put Mary in front of the Father, and seen her first. When He explained that He had not yet ascended unto the Father He was surely pointing on to the new order when He would be known not in the flesh but in the Spirit.

No, she must not think that He had come back to the old order of things, blessed as that might have been. He had come to bring a new order. One translation renders the command: "Cease clinging to me". She must not think that they could go on on any earthly basis, nor try to hold on to a past experience of devotion. He had moved into a new realm, and so must she. On the pre-resurrection side of things, even our best devotion only brings us to disappointment and heartbreak. Christ Risen means love on a new and lasting level; not natural clinging to the Lord or the things of the Lord, but ability to identify Him and be devoted to Him with spiritual perception and love.

Perfect love casts out fear. It may well be that Mary's broken heart was not unconnected with a real dread lest the old enemy should reclaim possession of her. So long as Jesus was alive, and so long as she could go to Him, there was no serious threat of falling back into the old bondage. When Jesus died, though, she must have trembled to contemplate the future. Even when the Lord has delivered us, we still have no power in ourselves to maintain our freedom; we may know that the old power has left us, but we can have no confidence in our own ability to keep it at bay. Suppose Jesus had not risen, how long would Mary have been able to resist the renewed onslaughts of the seven demons? No one can maintain a life of victory over the enemy who is not sharing the resurrection experience of Christ. Consider what happened at

Corinth. As soon as they failed to be identified with Christ in resurrection, they were overtaken by the demons of impurity, hatred and pride. There can be no assurance of lasting deliverance except on resurrection ground. When Mary realised that Christ had risen from the dead, she knew for a certainty that she could count on victory and deliverance, and that Satan's hold on her would never be renewed.

II. PETER—A NEW RELIABILITY

The next to be considered is Peter. None can tell how very much the resurrection meant to him. Until that moment he was really down and out. He had denied his Lord; he had sinned against the light. He had sinned in spite of many privileges; he had sinned in spite of many warnings; he had sinned in spite of his earnest determination not to do so. Nothing on earth could help him. No human hand could lift that burden. It was then that heaven intervened in the Person of the Risen Lord. Mark's Gospel, which is always assumed to have been written under Peter's influence, gives a hint of the gravity of Peter's position, for the angel, in speaking to the women, said: "He is risen; he is not here: . . . go, tell his disciples and Peter" (Mark xvi. 6-7). We are not told whether the additional "and Peter" was for the benefit of the rest of the disciples, or especially for Peter's own encouragement, but it seems clear that apart from such a special summons and appearance Peter would have been ruled right out. It was the resurrection which brought him in.

His failure had been so grievous and so public that the others might well have thought that he had forfeited his place among them. Unless an entirely new order could be introduced Peter was finished. As a man he had been proved quite untrustworthy; nobody could have confidence in him again. It was not enough to send a general message to "the disciples", for who would know whether Peter could be counted as one of them any more? On all natural and human grounds he was ruled out. They felt that never again would they know where they were with Peter.

This is true of us all. Peter is the example, not the exception. If ever we are found on the ground of nature, having to be tested by our own strength and worth, we too are ruled out. We cannot be depended on. In spite of all our resolves and protestations we shall be proved complete failures. Peter was the man who had been chosen and prepared for leadership, yet now it was not clear

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whether he could even be considered a simple disciple. We, too, may be conscious of a call to serve the Lord, and may even feel that we are meant to take some sort of lead among others ; but apart from the resurrection all our efforts to measure up to the responsibility will find us just as abject failures as ever Peter was. It was the resurrection which put it all right. It brought reinstatement in the eyes of others, for Christ Risen from the dead had brought in a new factor, and lifted Peter up into a new realm where there can be no failure but only glorious triumph. Did he ever get back into the old realm? There are hints that on at least one occasion he did. He quickly recovered, though, and came back into the sphere where he reckoned himself dead indeed with Christ and risen together with Him.

Perhaps it was not so much that the other disciples had their doubts about Peter as that he himself was in the depths of despair. Nothing but a special message from heaven could have convinced him that he was ever to be considered again as a disciple of the Lord whom he had betrayed. How necessary it was that Peter should discover the depths of his own evil nature, that he should realise what weakness and failure were bound to result when he tried to serve His Lord! It was necessary, but it was most painful. So black was his despair with himself that nothing less than a meeting with the Risen Christ could have persuaded him to go on. But it was all very necessary if he was really to be of any use to the Lord. It is equally necessary for us. So long as we think that we can be relied upon, or have any capacity for self-confidence, breakdown will never be very far off. The only safeguard for the Lord's interests in us is that we should pass right out of the realm of nature on to resurrection ground. It was this which happened to Peter as a result of his personal dealings with his Risen Master.

The Scriptures give no hint of what passed between the two. The Gospel story limits itself to recording the disciples' report that "The Lord is risen indeed and hath appeared unto Simon" (Luke xxiv. 34). Nothing more is disclosed, for, unlike the story of Mary, we are not told what Peter said, or what the Lord said to him. Clearly, then, it is better for us not to know. The matter was too intimate to be disclosed, and in any case spiritual transactions often lose their value if they are broadcast everywhere. Moreover it would be quite vain for us to try to imitate Peter. Each of us must discover for himself the treachery and folly of his own heart, and must have secret deal-

ings with the Lord about it. We, like Peter, can enter into a relationship which is all of grace, and out of that knowledge of Christ in resurrection we can become established and reliable. The natural life in Peter ruled him right out ; both in his own eyes, and in the estimation of the rest, he forfeited any right to be trusted as a disciple or apostle. The resurrection of Christ ruled him in again. And, thank God, it rules us in too.

III. THOMAS—A NEW FAITH

The next individual to be considered is Thomas, though he does not appear in Paul's list. Thomas was the doubter, the questioner, the man who either could not or would not believe. "Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe" (John xx. 24 - 25).

What shall we say to such a downright refusal to be convinced? Surely here was another of the apostolic band who must be ruled out. There was only one remedy for Thomas, and that was to confront him with the fact of the resurrection. He needed to see the risen Christ for himself. And that is precisely what happened. How gracious the Lord is! If a man is not finally closed to the light, if by any means he can be brought on to the ground of faith, then the Lord will spare no effort to bring him there. He invited Thomas to do what he had wanted. Of course Thomas didn't do it ; he was far too overcome with shame at his hardness of heart and could only stammer out words of surrender and worship. The Lord can deal even with the hopeless doubter if He can lift him out of the earthly realm of reasoning, into the spiritual sphere of resurrection life.

There are, of course, reasons why Thomas was so changed. Although he was an unbeliever, he was willing to be convinced, and to put himself in the way of any further light which might come. His difficulties arose from his not being together with the others, and they would never have been solved at all if he had maintained this detachment. In spite of not understanding their faith, he kept with them ; he did not withdraw or wait until he was sought out in a personal way, but gave the Lord every chance to meet him. In this respect he was different from many who may find it hard to believe and because of this stand off in a critical

way, refusing to be associated with the others. In the case of Mary and Peter their needs were met by an individual encounter with the Lord, but for Thomas, it seems that the only way for him was to keep in close touch with his fellow disciples; it was in their midst that personal revelation came to him.

Thomas was downright, and that is always a good quality. He found it hard to believe, and he was not going to pretend what was not true. We need not be too hard on him. All of us have had matters which so staggered our reasoning and were so different from anything in our past experience, that we found it impossible at first to accept them. Are they really the Lord, or are they just the vain imaginings of some of His people? This is a question which we may tightly ask. We do not want just to take things on because others say them, even if those others are honoured friends. Faith is a very personal matter; it requires first-hand dealings with the Lord.

Yes, but then the question arises as to how we behave. Do we withdraw, full of suspicions or of ridicule? do we obstinately make up our prejudiced minds that nothing can ever convince us? With all his faults, Thomas never did this. If he had done, he might well have been left behind while the others went on into new experiences of Christ. No, he gave the Lord a chance to show him. He was willing to be convinced. And he kept up a close association with the others, so that when the Risen Christ again appeared among them, he was in a position to find out for himself. In the midst of that little band, Thomas was singled out, and in full view of them all he laid aside his unbelief and capitulated absolutely to his Lord. What a difference the resurrection can make to faith!

IV. JAMES—A NEW RIGHTEOUSNESS

We now come to a name on Paul's list which is not mentioned in the Gospel accounts: it is James. Who was he? Most people agree that this was the brother of the Lord Jesus, the one later called James the Just. It seems clear, both from what is said about him in his later position at Jerusalem, and also from the use—or, more accurately, the misuse—that was made of his name by the judaizers, as well as from the letter which he wrote, that James was a man who was deeply concerned with the matter of righteousness. Tradition strongly confirms that this was his main characteristic. His real trouble, though, was not righteousness, but self-righteousness. As one of the Lord's

brothers, he had ample opportunity of knowing Him very well, yet he showed nothing but criticism and then definite rejection. Perhaps this was partly due to a legalistic objection to the way our Lord behaved. Being a stickler for the letter of the law, for the most rigid and orthodox observance of Judaism, he might be found on the side of the Pharisees, who could not understand Jesus mixing with sinners, and seeming not to observe the Sabbath. In any case we are definitely told that His brethren did not believe Him (John vii, 5).

Furthermore we are told that at the Cross Jesus had to commend his earthly mother, Mary, to the care of John, as if there were no one else to look after her. Where were James and the others? It looks as if they had renounced her too, in their repudiation of Jesus; a cruel thing to do—but then self-righteousness is cruel. It would be rare for a merely worldly man to abandon his mother just because he disagreed with her faith, but self-righteousness of a religious kind is quite capable of this, and of much more; its very zeal seems to make for hardness and cruelty.

One might think that there was not much hope for James. He comes nearly last on the list, and rightly so, for publicans and sinners find admission before the Pharisees. James very nearly missed the way, and only a miracle saved him. Yet all of us are far too prone to fall into his error, and to have our hearts hardened and our eyes blinded because of self-righteousness. It is a common fault of those who are trying to excel in spiritual things, and it has only one cure, and that is to have real dealings with the Risen Lord. Even Jesus could not transform James while they were on pre-resurrection ground, but a complete change came when James realised the meaning of the fact that Christ is indeed risen from the dead.

“LAST OF ALL . . . TO ME ALSO”

So far as Paul was concerned, he himself completed the band of witnesses. All that had happened to the others happened also to him. He, too, came into a new love, a new power, a new faith and an altogether new righteousness when he moved off his own ground on to the ground of Christ Risen. But can we not make our own list, not of literal eye-witnesses but of transformed believers, and if we do cannot we, like Paul, add our own testimony, “. . . to me also”? Resurrection life is meant to be shared. We are meant to have our part in Christ's resurrection. Let us not be theorists, like the Corinthians, contradicting in

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our lives the very foundational truth of our faith. If Christ is truly risen, then we too have a life hid with Him in God, an altogether new life, different

from what we have by nature: His resurrection life. Mary, Peter, Thomas, James, Paul . . . and me also!
H. F.

HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP

A man's dwelling in one country, and holding citizenship in another and far remote one, is not an unknown circumstance. In such a case, we may have the singular anomaly of one being most a stranger in the land in which he is present, and most at home in the land from which he is absent. Our blessed Lord was the first perfectly to realise this idea respecting the heavenly country. For He speaks of himself as "He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man who is in heaven" (John iii. 13). So truly a citizen of the other world was He that even while walking with men and talking with men He regarded Himself as there, not here. And this saying of His occurs in that discourse where, with an emphatic "verily, verily," He declares that "except a man be *born from above* he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Here is the key to the whole mystery. As the only begotten of the Father, Christ's native country was above; and during all the days of His flesh He neither relinquished His heavenly citizenship nor acquired an earthly residence. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath *visited* and redeemed his people" (Luke i. 68) is a significant note in the prophecy of His birth. And four times in the Gospels is our Lord's advent to earth spoken of as a visit. But it was a visit which never for a moment looked toward a permanent abiding. At His birth He was laid in a borrowed manger, because there was no room for Him in the inn; at His burial He was laid in a borrowed tomb, because He owned no foot of earth; and between the cradle and the grave was a sojourn in which "the Son of man had not where to lay His head." The mountain top whither He constantly withdrew to commune with His Father was the nearest to His home. And hence there is a strange pathetic meaning in that statement, "And every man went unto his own house: but Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives" (John vii. 53 - viii. 1).

Now, as it was with the Lord, so it is to be with His disciples. "For our citizenship is in heaven," says the apostle. Herein is the saying of Lady Powerscourt true: "The Christian is not one who looks up from earth to heaven, but one who looks down from heaven to earth." A celestial nativity implies a celestial residence; and with a certain

divine condescension may the Christian contemplate the sordid, self-seeking children of this present evil age and say, with His Lord: "Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world" (John viii. 23). Let us be admonished, however, that to say this truly and to live it really may subject us to the experience indicated by the apostle: "Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not" (I John iii. 1). There is a certain quaint beauty in the apology which an old reformer made for the hard treatment which he and his friends received from the men of this world. "Why, brethren," he would say, "they do not understand court manners or the etiquette of heaven, never having been in that country from whence we come; therefore it is that our ways seem strange to them." Would that in the Christians of to-day celestial traits were so conspicuous as to occasion like remark! Perhaps it is because there are so few high saints in the Church that there are so many low sinners outside the Church, since the ungodly can never be powerfully lifted up except by a Church that reaches down from an exalted spiritual plane.

What means that lofty address by the apostle, "Wherefore, holy brethren, *partakers of the heavenly calling*" (Heb. iii. 1)? The reference is not merely to our final destiny as those who are to be called up to heaven, but to our present service as those who have come down from heaven; sons of God rejoicing in a celestial birth, bringing the air and manners of glory into a world that knows not God. As such we are exhorted to "consider the *Apostle and High Priest* of our profession, Christ Jesus"; an apostle being one who comes forth from God, and a high priest one who goes in unto God. And Christ Jesus not only fulfils both these offices in Himself; as He says, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father" (John xvi. 28); but He makes us partakers with Him of the same heavenly calling, sending us into the world, as the Father hath sent Him, and permitting us "to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus," as He has entered in by His own blood.
A. J. GORDON.

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

OPENING IRON GATES

“And . . . they (Peter and the angel) came unto the iron gate that leadeth into the city; which opened to them of its own accord” (Acts 12, 10).

WE are told that when Peter was freed from prison he thought he must be dreaming—and no wonder, for among other things he had seen a big iron gate open by itself. Iron gates, especially prison gates, swinging open without anybody touching them sounds much more like a dream than real life. Yet I once saw a door open of its own accord, and I was certainly not dreaming, for it was in London and in broad daylight. There was not a soul near the door, no one to push it and no one to work a lever. It stayed shut until I began to walk up to it, and then, as I drew near, it really did open “of its own accord”.

It was a special door, and formed one of the working models in the Science Museum. There was a narrow passage or corridor which led up to it, and across this passage there passed an invisible beam of light. Those who wished to enter the door had to pass through this beam and thereby interrupt a current of electricity. This breaking of the current was what made the door open by itself. I saw a boy prove this by crawling along the floor below the level of the beam, and finding that he got right up to the closed door without it opening at all. The invisible ray was like some hidden eye, always alert to see if anyone wished to pass through the door. If people stood at a distance and waited for the door to open before they moved, nothing happened. If they asked for it to open, even if they shouted, still nothing happened. But if they walked quietly forward, doing nothing except simply walking on in faith, the ‘eye’ saw them, and sent off its message that they were coming, so that just as they drew near to the door, it opened to let them pass through.

Peter was not in the Science Museum, but in a Jerusalem prison; nevertheless there was an ‘eye’—the Lord’s Eye—which was watching for him as he came along in the moonlight with the angel. He might have stopped when he found the great barred gate ahead of him, and he might even have turned back to see if there was a way out in some other direction. He might have said that he would not move until the angel had gone forward and opened the gate for him. He might have started

crying with fear or unbelief. Happily he did none of these things, for the eye of the Lord was watching to see if he would go on in simple faith, and as he did so it “opened to them of its own accord”.

Now the door in the Museum didn’t really open by itself, though it seemed to do so, for there was a hidden power which moved it every time that the electric ‘eye’ signalled that the time had come. It was electric power which made the door open. If I had wanted to find the real reason why the door opened, I would have needed to leave the Museum, turn down the street and go right on until I came to the river. There on the bank of the Thames I should have found a great building called ‘The Battersea-Power-Station-No-Admittance-Except-On-Business’. Inside, great machines were at work, accumulating electric power which could be used whenever it was needed. As soon as the ‘eye’ said that I was walking up to the door, the power came through the wires to give energy enough to make it swing open in front of me. The secret of the self-opening door was in the Power Station.

When Peter had passed through his iron gate, he *did* go down the street, and then walked straight on until at last he stood at the gate of the house called ‘The-Upper-Room-Power-Station-No-Admittance-Except-On-Business’. It hadn’t got the name written up, but that is what it was, for the secret force which opened the iron gate for Peter was being generated in that Upper Room. Those who were there were workers, ‘On Business’, really giving themselves to the most important task of sending out the power to get Peter free from prison.

“Opened to them of its own accord”. That is what it looked like to Peter, but truly doors never do open of themselves. This gate opened without a hand being put to it, without even the angel touching it, but there was a secret power which did the work, for it was linked up with the power-house of prayer.

There are many servants of God who are kept locked up or who cannot move out into the place of God’s service for them because of some great iron gate which bars the way. What can they do? It is no use just waiting for something to happen before they move—I proved that at the Science

Museum. Like Peter, they must just move forward in faith ; and they can do so, provided that, when the Lord's eye sees that the time has come, there is a putting forth of divine power because of prayer-helpers. How wonderful it is that we can all have a part in this work of opening closed doors for the Lord's servants! Perhaps when they move forward and find the way clear they may think that the gate has opened to them of its own accord, but the truth will be that there was a hidden force

which moved it, a secret energy from the powerhouse of prayer.

'No Admittance Except On Business'. That notice was never needed at the Upper Room, for everybody was there on business. It was a business which is not easy, but which we can all do. Even boys and girls can help in this great work of praying for doors to open for the release of the Word of God.

H. F.

THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT

(EPHESIANS iv. 3)

THIS unity is that which is resultant from the indwelling and dominating control of the Holy Spirit.

The illustration is that of the head and the body. Every limb or member, every faculty of the body is controlled by the nervous system, and this nervous system works from and to the head where it has its base.

In the Body of Christ the Holy Spirit is the great nervous system, and only as there is an immediate response to every intimation of the will of the Head, and the life unbrokenly in correspondence with His mind, can there be an expression of the unity of which the New Testament speaks.

Three things must be clearly noticed.

1. We cannot "keep" what does not exist. The admonition presupposes our having received the Holy Spirit into our lives in a vital way and having surrendered ourselves entirely to His control and direction.

2. We cannot create this unity. It is essentially spiritual. Creeds, organizations, the social spirit, compromise on matters of interpretation and practice can never achieve it.

3. There is the paradox of unity. "Peace" in the scriptures means harmony. But while Christ is called "the Prince of peace", and while that harmony has been created in many lives and spheres where He has been enthroned, He clearly said that one result of His coming would be not peace but a sword.

It is clear that wherever His Cross has been fully presented, there has been trouble and upheaval. All the things against which His Cross stands have at once created a state of war. The world, the flesh, in all their forms and expressions, make spiritual unity impossible ; and in so far as even Christians are influenced in their judgments, their standards of reckoning, their conceptions, as well as in their motives, methods and means, by

the world-spirit or the Adam nature, these things likewise make spiritual oneness impossible.

The fuller the presentation of the Cross, the greater the arousing of the elements of the fallen nature and therefore—on the one hand, the greater peril and possibility of discord, and, on the other hand, the call for a more complete capitulation to the life of the Spirit as against the life in the flesh.

This work of separating will be carried out in ourselves personally, in our homes, in our local churches, and in Christendom at large.

On this basis of flesh and spirit the "house divided against itself" will fall.

True unity has its birth at Calvary, where the world and the flesh—with the Devil working through both to maintain his discord in the universe—were dealt with and for ever ruled out of the new creation.

This unity which Calvary creates calls for our diligence for its maintenance.

Certain things might well be borne in mind:—

(i) The Holy Spirit is of one mind, and never leads in two ways which contradict each other in principle.

(ii) The Holy Spirit is unchanging in truth. With Him there is no variableness from time to time.

(iii) Differences of degree should never be a ground of division. The different ages and degrees of maturity in our family need never throw the family into schism.

(iv) Basic contradictions or inconsistencies will ever result in arrested fellowship, and be fruitful ground for the satanic sower of seeds of discord.

(v) We must never act on a principle of expediency, policy, or prejudice, in order to try to advance the Lord's interests and safeguard the truth. It is better to have a more limited sphere of

usefulness—as men regard it—than to keep doors open by compromise. This, at length, brings a breach with the faithful.

(vi) Spiritual oneness is “in Christ,” not in ourselves. The ascendancy of Christ over self is the only way to this oneness.

(vii) Let it be ever recognised that in the Lord's spiritual house there are His order and appointments. To be out of our place, to assume a position or ministry which is not ours, to interfere with others who are the “Lord's anointed”,

to mentally ignore, despise, or set aside such, to be negligent of our own ministry, or in any other way to disturb the Divine order is to upset “the unity of the Spirit”, and to throw the Body into a disturbed and conflicting state. There are many things to be discerned in our “giving diligence to keep the unity”, but if the Cross has been truly applied to our own life, and we are really walking after the Spirit, we shall know within ourselves what these things are.

T. A-S.

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WE BEHELD HIS GLORY

(CHAPTER II OF VOL. II)

Reading : John xi and xii.

"Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that if thou believedst, thou shouldst see the glory of God?" (John xi. 40).

"And Jesus answereth them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified" (John xii. 23).

CHAPTERS eleven and twelve have to be taken together, for they are part and counterpart. From the above citations from each it will be seen that, once again, the governing factor is the glory of the Son of Man as the Son of God.

Before we can rightly understand the subject-matter of the chapters we need to understand the meaning of glory.

WHAT THE GLORY OF GOD IS

The glory of God is the expression of the satisfaction of His nature. When and where God's nature—His very being—is satisfied, that satisfaction emanates, and there is a spirit of inexpressible joy, peace, rest, beauty, wonder, harmony, and life. All these elements are the components or constituents of what is called 'Glory'. When any person is filled with this spirit and experiences something of these elements, almost the only suitable and adequate exclamation is 'Glory!'

"O, what a foretaste of glory Divine!"

If our whole life was gathered up into one particular object and concern, so that we had nothing else to justify our existence, and that object was a consuming passion, so that for it we lived, thought, planned, sacrificed, suffered, worked, and longed with an unutterable longing; and then that object was realised, reached, possessed: if that happened, we should be quite unable to shut it all in to ourselves—it would break out and affect all around us. In its realm it would be what we would call 'Glory'—we should exclaim, 'Isn't it glorious?!'

Well, lift it all into the so much greater and higher realm of Infinite God; make it eternal and not of time; spiritual and not merely temporal; immortal and not corruptible; and that—where it exists—is Divine glory, and it is affecting and wonderfully satisfying.

God's nature craves for that which corresponds to it. God's nature contains the elements of His purpose and desire. Out of His very being He has projected His purpose. To that purpose He has committed Himself; has planned, laboured, thought, sacrificed, suffered, longed; and for its sake He is never resting. When He sees it, in its beginning or increase, in its principle or growth, His 'good pleasure', satisfaction and joy are ministered to, so that those concerned register and share His satisfaction; and that is 'Glory'.

This, then, is the key to John's 'Gospel', and to these two chapters in particular. Let us use the key.

DEATH—THE COUNTER TO GLORY

Here is Lazarus. It is a fair and beautiful human scene. Strong affection between sisters and brother; a lovely home, to which Jesus turned when He could, knowing of a warm welcome, a deep understanding and appreciation—even if sometimes, under peculiar stress, there may have been a little domestic tension. This scene is broken into by sickness and—death!

Death is the enemy of all that is beautiful. Death is always death, whether it be our death or the Lord's death. When it says of Him that 'He tasted death', it means that it was the bitterest and most devastating cup that He drank. Death is always the breakdown of Divine purpose, the contradiction to God's will; the veil over the Divine glory. Death—if it remains—is a closed door.

But more—death is no mere hap, chance, accident; the *natural* termination of a tenure of life! If the Bible is clear on anything, it is certainly clear on this, that death was not intended, but is the result of a wrongful exercise of choice—the exercise of choice in a manner contrary to the will of God. That exercise is called Sin, and its wages are not the grateful emoluments of services rendered, but judgment upon a state and position altogether contrary to the Creator's mind.

Death declares that there is something that does not, and never can, bring satisfaction to God's nature. There is that which declares a Divine halt, not a Divine purpose. There is *no* glory in death! Some people may labour to sublimate death; others declare, 'There is no death'; but the Bible just stands by its own definition and declaration:

“the last *enemy* . . . death”, and it is for “abolition”, not bowing out or sublimating.

Such then is the setting of John xi.

We must next see the immediate implication of the Bethany scene and event; for there is something of deliberateness, both in what Jesus said about it, and in His strange behaviour over it.

“*This sickness is . . . for the glory of God*”.

“*Jesus . . . abode . . . where he was*”.

“*Lazarus is dead*”.

That is the death side. It had a twofold significance: the first is in chapter xi, and the second in chapter xii.

(I) LAZARUS AS REPRESENTING ISRAEL

It is significant that this ‘Gospel’ stands so largely in relation to a Jewish background. See, for example, the references to Jewish Feasts. Then see how everything is in contention with—or by—Jewish Rulers and Teachers. We saw this in our last chapter, in relation to the Shepherd and the flocks and folds. It is not possible to separate the “signs” (miracles) of John’s Gospel from the spiritual state of Israel at the time. Hence Lazarus speaks of Israel’s condition, need, and only hope.

We have to remember the affectional side. It is clearly stated that “Jesus loved . . . Lazarus”. Lazarus was called “he whom thou lovest”, and when Jesus wept the comment of the bystanders was: “Behold how he loved him”. Whatever may have been the stern and angry attitude of Jesus toward the “blind leaders”, and toward the cold and deadly system which Judaism had become, there is no question as to His love for Israel. See, for example, His tears and hear His lament over Jerusalem. If His way over Lazarus seems strange, it is not lack of love, but rather love’s clear discernment of the only way of hope. Lazarus “is sick”, and who will say that Israel was not desperately sick in those days? So desperately sick, and of such a sickness, that there is no remedy, no cure, no healing, no patching up. There will be no intervention to preserve and prolong *that* Israel. Israel *must* die; that is the only way of any hope or glory at all.

So Lazarus dies. But more—he is left in death until the verdict of *nature* is: “he stinketh”. There is an Old Testament word which says that a consequence of disobedience in Israel—if persisted in—would be that they would become a byword among nations—metaphorically they would stink in their nostrils. How true that has become! So Lazarus sets forth God’s estimate of, and verdict

upon, Israel. ‘The wound has become incurable’.

We leave that for the moment, and go on to the second aspect.

(II) LAZARUS AS REPRESENTING MANKIND

Throughout the ‘Gospel’, and with Israel as an illustration, the state and need of mankind as a whole is revealed. There is a very significant change of title from chapter xi to chapter xii. In xi it is “Son of God” several times. In xii that title is not used, but “Son of Man” is. There is a sense in which the former title was peculiarly the challenge and test to Israel at that time. Of course it is always so, in every realm, but Israel’s day was closing and it would close on this issue peculiarly. The world’s day is not yet at its close—although it may very nearly be. But it will be governed by the same issue as was Israel’s.

The point here is that the transition from the immediate emphasis upon Son of God to Son of Man is just the widening of the circle to the whole race, for Son of Man is a racial designation, not only a national. What was true of Lazarus as representing the state and need of Israel is true of the whole human race. Incurable, sick unto death; dead, and stinking. That is the true verdict; that is God’s attitude. The only hope is in resurrection, a new beginning, and that by and with Jesus Christ. That natural state of man can *never* bring satisfaction to God, therefore there can *never* be any glory there. It is a nature utterly different from God’s.

So the events of Bethany pass by swift and direct transition to xii. 24: the corn of wheat falling into the ground and *dying*, in order that a new organism may appear with a propagating life. Connected with this are the explicit statements concerning the Cross (verses 31–34).

THE CROSS IS AN END

What was it, and is it, that necessitated the holding back of Jesus until Lazarus had been in the grave four days? Why should it be a part of the drama that, when there is *true* description and admission made, the expression “he stinketh” should be the only appropriate one? The answer is that man at some time (we know when) became infected by a fatal virus called ‘self’, and the essence of self is pride.

‘God beholdeth the proud *afar* off’.

“Jesus . . . abode . . . in the place where he was”.

‘Pride is an abomination unto God’.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

It is the selfhood of man, his self-sufficiency, self-importance, self-will, self-occupation, etc., which will not allow Jesus to be absolute Lord and God, that makes it necessary for the Cross to engulf him. There is no hope for him until he sees himself crucified with Christ and buried with Him! When Paul followed the infinite descent of Christ from the glory of equality with God as His right, down through incarnation and emptying, he concluded the emptying course with "Yea, the death of the Cross", as though nothing could so completely demonstrate the meaning of Christ's death; not a vestige of honour or pride, or respect, or glory. 'My God . . . thou hast forsaken me'.

It requires a true apprehension of the meaning of Christ's death to come to the place where it is not only a sentiment uttered, but a course taken—

"When I survey the wondrous Cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,

* * * * *

[I] pour contempt on all my pride".

This nature governed by the self principle is in the way of corruption, and is ineligible for glory. Let it go where God has put it, and let us look to and hope alone in Jesus—"the resurrection and the life". There must be just as real a crisis in our lives as there was in Bethany. The state was incurable. Death was a terrible reality. Jesus met it at its uttermost point and, through the power of His own other and different life, completely overthrew it. These are the truths represented in Bethany and Lazarus—truths which are the substance of the Gospel, both for the saved and the unsaved, and borne out by all the subsequent New Testament teaching.

RESURRECTION—THE GROUND OF GLORY

In resurrection God starts all over again with a New Creation; and in a spiritual and real way that New Creation will receive the same verdict as that which was originally given concerning the material and illustrative old creation. "God saw that it was good", "God rested". "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased". God, finding His nature satisfied, expresses that satisfaction. And then there follows the inclusive verdict: "We beheld his glory".

This can be put to the test in the simplest ways. When one, knowing himself or herself to be a

sinner, hopeless and broken-hearted, with God afar off, turns and, seeing in Jesus God's way, says, "Lord, I believe!"—the issue is that the heart is filled with such a sense of rest, satisfaction, and joy, that the only suitable word to describe it is "Glory".

The same is true when a controversy has arisen between a child or servant of God and his or her Lord. The glory goes out. But let that whole matter be brought to the Cross and acknowledged to be what it is—a reasserting of the natural life of self—let that be put where God has put it, in the grave of Jesus, and once more rest and unspeakable relief fill the heart, and the glory returns.

So we note some other features of the glory.

There is the quick transition from the individual and personal to the collective and corporate. The next scene after the raising of Lazarus is the feast at Bethany. The feast is made for Him who is the Resurrection and the Life. They are eating and drinking together with Him on the ground of a new life. His glory is manifested, not only in the one, but in the many. This leads to a new act of worship. Worship is always the very essence of glory.

From one Corn of wheat falling into the ground and dying there comes the "much fruit", many corns and ears of corn; at length a mighty harvest, of which Jesus was the "Firstfruits".

In relation to the corn of wheat He said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified," and it was so! From Calvary—the Passover—came Pentecost, and who will say that Pentecost was not glory?

But—and there is always someone lurking in the shadows to spoil—it was not long before reactions set in and Judas and all his ilk set a counter-movement going. *How the Devil hates to see Jesus glorified!* How his jealousy and envy are stirred to overflowing hatred when he sees a company bound together in one life, feasting with Christ in worshipping love! Bitter, bitter is his spite at that, and he will ruin it if he can! So it was, and so it will ever be.

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Ps. cxxxiii. 1). But Satan hates it, and sees in it the undoing of all his work to rob Christ of His inheritance. After the feast—Judas and the Pharisees. After Pentecost, Herod and the world.

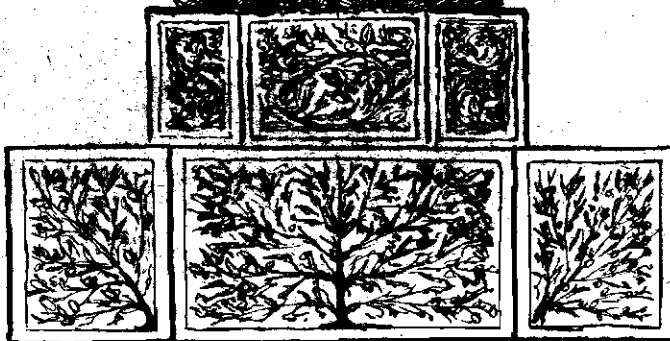
But the far end of all is the glory—God's nature satisfied, and that satisfaction displayed in the New Jerusalem—"having the glory of God".

T. A-S.

"A Candlestick of Pure Gold: of Beaten Work" Exodus 25. 31.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

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



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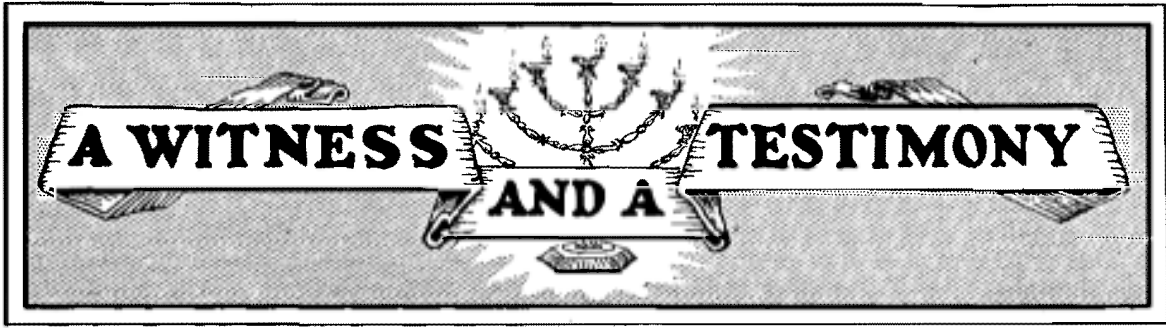
THIS MINISTRY

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

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

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

'Personal' letters should be addressed to
Mr. T. AUSTIN-SPARKS.



MARCH — APRIL, 1954.

Vol. 32, No. 2.

EDITORIAL

Beloved of God,

"THE LORD IS GREATER THAN ALL . . ."

That is the motto which we have taken to govern this year 1954. Under that all-embracing statement we have gathered three other aspects of His superior greatness.

The inclusive declaration—for such it was (Exod. xviii. 11)—related to the emancipation of an elect nation from this world. All the forces of Satan and men were fully extended in that conflict. The battle seemed to sway nine times between defeat and victory, and there was plenty of room for a day-to-day despair as to the triumphant issue. But God was drawing out the power of the enemy to its final limit in order to show the *exceeding* greatness of His power. The final exclamation in the presence of the accomplished fact was: ". . . the Lord is greater than all . . ." It requires no deep knowledge of the Bible to see that what we have in the letter to the Ephesians corresponds to Exodus in a spiritual and still greater way, and that for a similar heavenly purpose the transcendent greatness of the Lord is in operation.

The first aspect included is: "*God is greater than man*" (Job xxxiii. 12). The setting is in the drama of Job. Over a long period, and with a volume of arguments, three 'friends' of Job had exhausted themselves in trying to prove that Job's suffering was due to his sin. Job, on the other hand, exhausted both them and himself in proving that they were wrong. An *impasse* is reached, and neither side can move the other. Then a fourth, hitherto a silent listener, begins to speak. He takes neither side, but takes position with God. "God is greater than man", he says, regarding the three, for God knows what they know not as to the real background of what is happening. They talked and argued in utter ignorance. God understood all. It is ignorance and folly to attribute all suffering to the sin of the sufferer. There is a mystery behind much suffering, and it may amount to the very vindication of God, as in Job's case, but supremely in the case of God's own Son. There is such a thing as "the fellowship of *his* sufferings". This is far beyond man's wisdom.

But Job thought that he had vindicated himself, and stood four-square upon his own righteousness. Yet God's standard, both of wisdom and holiness, is greater than that of the most perfect man. Man, at his best, cannot stand equal to God. The end of the conflict sees God standing alone in His transcendent wisdom, power, and grace, and man at His feet worshipping.

The next statement, in John iv. 4, is: "*Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.*"

The context shows that "he that is in the world" is inclusive of "that wicked one", "false spirits", "false prophets" (Antichrist), false brethren, "the world".

That constitutes a fairly formidable situation for the children of God. But "greater is he that is in you". "In you"; not outside, but *inside*. The balance of power, no, the outweighing power, is within, when He is within. "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

Finally, "*God is greater than our heart*" (1 John iii. 20).

The passage is admittedly a difficult one. "Heart" here must be regarded as synonymous with 'conscience'.

The heart, or conscience, acts accusingly or excusingly. But in either case our consciences are not infallible. They are still trammelled by tradition and other things of the past.

If our hearts condemn us, there is in God a way of dealing with and removing condemnation. (See the context of the whole Letter.) If we justify ourselves to our own satisfaction we must still bring everything into the presence of God, for He may see that to which we are blind, and we may still see that there are hidden things which would undercut all self-righteousness.

"God is greater than our heart" is a blow struck at introspection. Our hearts—either way—are not the final criterion. It is also a blow struck at spiritual pride. Finally, it is a blow struck at despair because of our own sinfulness.

So the "all" is a very great and many-sided all. Perhaps our need is to see that the Lord is much greater than we have thought.

May we all have our hearts enlarged to the greater dimensions of the one who is *our* God.

With warmest greetings in Him,

Yours for His glory,

T. AUSTIN-SPARKS.

THE RECOVERING OF THE LORD'S TESTIMONY IN FULNESS

IV THE PRINCIPLE OF RESURRECTION

"... and salt without prescribing how much" (Ezra vii. 22).

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

"Salt is good: but if the salt have lost its saltiness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves" (Mark ix. 50).

WE come back to the book of Nehemiah, and in connection with the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem under the inspired leadership of Nehemiah, we want to look at one more inclusive factor which this work represents. We are speaking about the recovery of the Lord's testimony—what Nehemiah spoke of as the "great work" which God hath put into his heart to do—and when we come to consider this recovery on the positive side, there is one great principle of recovery which includes all the other work. It is

the principle of resurrection. It does not require very much profound thought to recognise that the rebuilding of the destroyed wall of Jerusalem comes into line with a testimony of resurrection, and to see how 'all of a piece' this is with Israel's history, because we are seeing—I trust we can say that—that this wall is an emblem of the spiritual history of the people. What is true of the wall at this time is true of the people. The wall only expresses the condition of the people—spiritually broken down, with many gaps, nothing complete or perfect, nothing to full satisfaction, and therefore nothing to the glory of God.

We pointed out, earlier, that Nehemiah was contemporary with Malachi, and Malachi's prophecies give us a very clear, though very terrible, account of the spiritual condition of the people of God at that time. So this wall, representing the state of the people, reveals very clearly the need for a resurrection. Israel's history repeatedly called for that, but in this very connection you will remember that, in looking on beyond the captivity, the greater

prophets had spoken of their return as resurrection. For instance, Ezekiel, with the captivity fully in view, had cried to the people, as commanded by the Lord: "Behold, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves" (Ezek. xxxvii. 12); and in that great picture-parable of this—the valley of dry bones—we have undoubtedly the matter of resurrection in relation to Israel after the captivity, after the exile. So that their coming back a remnant from Babylon to Jerusalem, and building or re-building the wall, answers to the prophecies concerning resurrection, although in the temporal and earthly aspect the fulfilment is very imperfect. A much greater fulfilment is still in view.

But here is the point—it is a matter of resurrection. The going into captivity was first of all judgment, judgment for sin, and it is therefore represented as followed by death: for death follows in the wake of judgment, and Israel is represented as having gone into death, into a grave; their exile being in the nature of a spiritual grave. If we ask what death is, it is being put away from God, it is separation from God. And so it was with them. They were out of the place where God had appointed to meet them; they were away from the Lord. And if to be put away from the Lord in judgment is anything, it certainly is death.

THE RESURRECTIONS OF THE EARTHLY JERUSALEM

Now whenever God has moved again to recover His testimony in any part or in greater fulness, such movement has always been marked by that which is inherent in resurrection, namely, newness of life—or, to put it in another form, victory over death. It has always been like that, and it always is like that. A movement of God in relation to His testimony in greater fulness always has the character of a resurrection, the nature of a new life.

The historical records of Jerusalem show that the city has been again and again the scene of sieges, overrunnings and destructions. The very survival of Jerusalem just as an earthly city is nothing short of a miracle. There are other great cities which, so far as this world is concerned, have been far greater and more glorious than Jerusalem. Babylon, for instance, Ur of the Chaldees, and we might even say Rome, with others. They were great and mighty cities, from the standpoint of men greater and mightier than Jerusalem. But, so far as their former glory was concerned, they have gone down once and for all. Babylon—where is Babylon? Ur—where is Ur? A year or two ago I flew over Ur of the Chaldees—and what

could be seen? Nothing but excavations of centuries gone by. And Rome—what is Rome now compared with the great and glorious imperial city of past centuries? a shadow filled with monuments and ruins, things which speak of the past glory. These cities have gone down, to rise again no more as they were.

But Jerusalem—she has come up, again and again she has come up after siege and destruction, showing quite clearly that God—the God of resurrection—is interested in Jerusalem. He is maintaining, even in the world, in a temporal Jerusalem—a poor thing from man's standpoint; I do not think any one would really choose to live in Jerusalem apart from sentiment—He is maintaining, in a Jerusalem that has been raised as from the dead again and again, a parable of the greater truth.

THE FULL TRIUMPH OF THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM OVER DEATH

And when we move from the earthly to the heavenly; when we move from the old dispensation—the dispensation of that Jerusalem, as Paul puts it, "that now is", here on the earth—away to that other Jerusalem of which the Apostle speaks, in heaven, the "Jerusalem which is above" (Gal. iv. 25, 26), or to that Jerusalem to which we are now come, according to Hebrews xii. 22, or to the Jerusalem which appears at last in fulness of glory (Rev. xxi. 10): what do we come to? We come to the full triumph over death, because it is in that final heavenly Jerusalem that the tree of life is found, and the river of water of life. Everything speaks of death fully and finally conquered. So that the wall in recovery is but a parable and a picture of this great truth, substantiated in history, but fully realised in glory in the spiritual realm. This is a monument to the principle that when God is associated, really associated, with anything or with anyone, or when they are associated with God, the mark will be resurrection—newness of life. It will be life. A testimony in life is the testimony that is here represented as being recovered, throwing its light right on to our own time, which is marked by so many features that characterized the days of Nehemiah spiritually. God will move again—shall we not say God is moving again?—to bring about in a new way, within a people, this great testimony to the indestructibility of His own life; something which declares that His life, though it may seem oft-times to go into death, to be swallowed up, to be overwhelmed, nevertheless comes up again; this life cannot be fully and finally destroyed. A testimony in life. It is a testimony to something that God does, that is the point.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

RESURRECTION THE UNIQUE PROVINCE
OF GOD

We have so often said that resurrection is the unique province of God. We may do a great deal at resuscitations, artificial respirations, but we can do nothing in resurrections. Once death has taken place, that is the end of all man's power and hope, and then it is for God to act, or it is nothing. God is the God of resurrection—that is His alone prerogative: so that anything that really is a work of God bears this mark, that nothing can account for it but an indestructible, imperishable life. There is something there which is more than of man.

Sometimes man comes into the things of God—we shall see that in this book as we proceed—usurping the place of God in His Jerusalem, in relation to His testimony; and then death begins and destruction concludes the process; God hands the thing over to death. It is a solemn thing to realise that there comes a point where God has to stand back and hand over to death, because man has taken hold and got in His way. But when man does this the fires of judgment work. The result of such interference with God will work itself out; and then, when that work of fiery purification is accomplished, God returns and raises from the dead. That is the history of many things with which God has commenced, but from which in the course of events He has had to stand back, and then again He has come in. It is like that.

And it is like that sometimes in individual Christian lives. God finds that He can go on no further; He has gone as far as He can. Now He is obstructed; there is a will there that refuses to yield to Him. There is something there that will not let go to God. He stands back, and if it be through long, long decades—witness Israel's forty years in the wilderness, and seventy years of captivity; long years of barrenness, emptying and desolation—the Lord does not give up. He would recover, He would restore, He would come again, He would have a testimony even there. But oh, what a solemn warning not to lose life, to lose years, to lose the fruitfulness which might be, by resisting the Lord, and knowing nothing but a barren death so far as our usefulness to Him is concerned. Something that God has done is the testimony that God would revive, not what man has done for God, but what God Himself has done, and more—a testimony not only in life, but a testimony of life; not only what God has done but what God will do through what He has done. He has raised an instrument, He has brought it back to life, He has a vessel resurrected—now see what He will do through it!

A testimony of life—that surely is the glorious triumph of the ultimate Jerusalem “coming down from God out of heaven”. What a chequered history that name Jerusalem has had! But now at last there is triumph in connection with that very name. No longer does it represent or symbolize defeat and failure and tragedy. It is now the symbol of God's triumph. Here at last death is swallowed up in victory. And what happens? Out from that Jerusalem there flows a river of water of life. The nations are deriving the value. The tree is bearing its fruit, watered by that river, and the leaves of the tree are for the health of the nations. It is a testimony of life.

EVERYTHING PERMEATED BY LIFE

Now, there is a good deal of difference between what is commonly called life and what God means by life, and that is why I read those fragments about salt. This life of which we are speaking has in it an element. I only pass from one language to another when I change from using the word ‘life’ to using the word ‘vitality’. It is the same word in two different languages, but it is useful here. This life has a *vital* element in it. There is something here that really has got a sting in it. We sometimes speak of things having a ‘kick’ in them. There is something there, a positive element which, if we touch it, makes us realise we are touching something mysterious, something vital. If that touches a situation, it registers; the situation knows that it has been touched by something. It is this element that is represented by salt.

Now, salt is a very interesting thing in the Bible. You notice we quoted from Ezra. Ezra, of course, precedes Nehemiah, Ezra and Nehemiah are working together to the same end. They are all part of the whole. Ezra had to do mainly with the beautifying of the temple after it had been rebuilt, and with certain reforms, and with the recovery of the Word of God. But when God acted sovereignly—according to the first words of the book of Ezra, “that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom” and gave liberty and every provision and facility to those who voluntarily chose to go back to Jerusalem, not by law or constraint, but of a willing heart—in all this marvellous provision that the king made, there was this added, this strange thing. ‘Give them this and that in abundance, silver and gold and all the other things’: and then this—“and salt without prescribing how much”. Limitless salt!

What was that for? Well, you see, salt is a synonym for life; even outside of the Jewish or Hebrew economy, salt was recognised almost universally as the symbol of life. In some realms they made a covenant in blood, by shedding one another's blood and then mingling it. That was a covenant in blood between two people or two communities. In other realms they took salt and mingled it, making a covenant in salt; but the two things meant the same thing. Blood and salt meant life. No sacrifice was ever regarded by God as acceptable without salt. That meant, in the thought of those times, that God would never accept a dead sacrifice. Every sacrifice offered to God must be a living one. Yes, the animal was slain, and to all intents and purposes it was dead, but salt contradicted death, denied that it was dead, gave it that something, that vital element, that made it a living sacrifice. The Lord Jesus said, "Ye are the salt of the earth" (Matt. v. 13), and Paul said, "Present your bodies a living sacrifice" (Rom. xii. 1). "Salted with salt" was a phrase of the Lord Jesus (Mark ix. 49).

"Salt without prescribing how much". This was in the recovery testimony of Nehemiah. That is, life more abundant; abundant life. That is the testimony that the Lord is seeking, this vital element. "Ye are the salt of the earth". In other words, you are the very life in this dead world. With all the death that is here—and everything as far as God is concerned is in death: only Christians know it, but they do know it: if we are really the Lord's, we know how dead this world is, it is death all around—the Lord says, 'In the midst of all that, you are the life, you are very life, of this death-encompassed world; you are the life of the world, you are the salt of the earth'. "Be salted with salt". "Have salt in yourselves". 'Be alive'; to change the language again, 'be vital'.

Such is the testimony to be recovered—something, a mysterious something, that is not in the mineral: for there can be the mineral that has the show, the appearance, of the real stuff, but it has lost its vital quality. "If the salt have lost its savour . . ." You can have all the pretence, all the profession, all the outward appearance, but something has gone, and that missing something says the testimony that should be within is not there. To recover that something is what the Lord is after: not an outward framework, not so much material with a semblance—it was the charge laid at the door of a church in the book of the Revelation, that they 'had a name to live but were dead' (Rev. iii. 1)—not that, but this something, this mysterious something, about the Lord's people which comes from God Himself and which speaks

of the presence of God within them.

AN OLD TESTAMENT ILLUSTRATION

We have illustrations of this in the Old Testament. We have Elisha and the men of Jericho who one day went to him and said, "The situation of this city is pleasant"—"every prospect pleases"—"but the water is bad, and the land casteth its fruit" (II Kings ii. 19)—the mark of death. Of course you know where that came from. You remember that when Jericho was destroyed, the curse was pronounced upon it, and Joshua said, "Cursed be the man before the Lord that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: with the loss of his firstborn shall he lay the foundation thereof, and with the loss of his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it" (Josh. vi. 26). Death, the mark of the curse, was pronounced upon it, and now these years afterwards the men of the city come and say that in the very waters of this city, with all the prospects that are fine and good, death resides; nothing comes to perfection, "all is vanity and vexation of spirit", all is disappointment. Elisha said, "Bring me a new cruse and put salt therein". They brought him the new cruse and put the salt in, and he emptied cruse and salt into the waters and the waters were healed. Death was destroyed by the salt, but it had to be in a new vessel. This is resurrection—newness of life in a new creation.

We could stay long with that, but you see the point. If Elisha is the prophet of life, as undoubtedly he is, for everything about him and all his works speaks of life conquering death, here is the testimony. The salt is the emblem of life which destroys the power of death and of barrenness, unfruitfulness and disappointment. A wonderful life is this. 'Ye are the life of the earth'.

We have other illustrations, but I am not going to stay to give them. We said in a previous study that the book of Ezra represents the sovereignty of God, while the book of Nehemiah represents the co-operation of man with that sovereignty. Going back to Ezra: if that book is the embodiment of the sovereign activity of God, God acting from heaven on His own, right out from Himself, what is He doing? If He stirred the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, and if Cyrus made this decree, and if the decree was the result of a work of the Spirit of God in Cyrus, then, when Cyrus said, "And salt without prescribing how much", it was a pro-vocation of the sovereignty of God that made him say it. Cyrus was undoubtedly an instrument of Divine sovereignty. You know how Isaiah speaks about him. "Thus saith the Lord to his anointed,

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

to Cyrus . . . I will gird thee, though thou hast not known me" (Isa. xlv. 1, 5). An instrument in the sovereignty of God. And now this man, in the hand of God's sovereignty, is saying: "and salt without prescribing how much". All these other things may mean very little if there is no salt, no vitality. This element must so to speak pervade the whole.

God is after this something which is more than the framework of things. It is an indefinable something. Sometimes you may hear hymns—some of the good beautiful hymns—rendered on gramophone records. These hymns may be sung by two different kinds of people. Some of them may be sung by a very capable, a very artistic choir, sung with perfect technique, with beautiful artistry, and with fine voices and harmony. Others, on the other hand, may not be sung with all that professional skill, with all that artistry, or with all that standard and quality of voice—but you can tell the difference between the saved and the unsaved every time. You know that on this one side it is a church choir of unconverted people. I mean this—perhaps that is harsh judgment—there is something lacking. It is wonderful, it is beautiful, but there is something not there that you miss. On the other hand, you know these people are saved people, they are singing because they love the Lord, they have a relationship with the Lord.

Now of course it takes a Christian to discern the difference; but there is a difference. You know it, you have heard it yourself. It is just *salt*—this indefinable something that makes all the difference between those who are in vital relationship with the Lord and those who are doing the same thing without that relationship. They have got all the semblance, all the appearance, all the bulk, of the salt—yes, but there is something not there. The salt is without savour. We do not want just a technique, accurate, correct doctrine, proper Christian practice, forms, liturgies and all the rest. What is necessary, whether these are present or not, is that there should be this vital something that causes people to realise: 'Well, they may not be artists,

they may not be tremendously capable people, there may not be all the marks of wonderful efficiency about them; *but* you meet the Lord, you register some indefinable thing that answers to your heart, and that is the thing that matters'. The recovery of that testimony counts for more than all the words, the phraseology, the form, the technique. It is quite possible to have a New Testament technique and New Testament churches, Christian doctrine and practice, but still be without that something that registers, and that is the testimony to be recovered.

So we see that the issue is one of life. Now, in order to get that, God often has to take very stringent measures. He will never be satisfied with anything less than that. However much else there may be, He will not be satisfied with less than that, and so He will be prepared to put the thing through the fire, even to seem to part with it for a time, if peradventure He might recover that which has been lost. He is the God of resurrection. Maybe the Lord is dealing with some of us on this line. There was more salt at one time than there is now. There was more sting in our testimony than there is now. The Lord may be leading us through a hard way. Or perhaps there never was that sting that the Lord wanted, and the Lord is trying to teach us that He is the God of resurrection—that we are helpless, useless, worthless, until God Himself acts and we cry out for that something which only He can give. Whatever it may be, this is what the Lord is after, and He will deal with us all the time, in this way and in the other way, with that in view. His dealings will be in order that at the end there shall be a testimony to His absolute triumph over the power of death—that which only the Lord can do; and if you feel to-day that you are there, that only the Lord can do it, believe me you are in a very hopeful position. Mr. Spurgeon once said that if ever you feel that it requires a miracle to accomplish a certain thing, you are in the right position to ask God for it!

T. A-S.

WASTE

Reading: Mark xiv. 3-9.

"Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever the gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her" (Mark xiv. 9).

THE Lord has ordained that the story of Mary anointing Him with that costly ointment should always accompany the story of the Gospel. What

Mary has done should always be coupled with what the Lord has done. That is what He said Himself. I think we all know the story very well—how that Mary came into the house with a small alabaster flask containing some ointment—very costly ointment, nard—and how she broke the flask and anointed the head of the Lord. From the details given in connection with her brother's restoration to life (John xii. 1-8), we know that the family

was not an especially wealthy one. The sisters had to work in the house themselves. One of these sisters, Mary, had an alabaster cruse with three hundred pence' worth of ointment in it, and she offered the whole thing to the Lord. With one stroke she broke it, and poured the whole contents upon the head of the Lord. Human reasoning said this was really too much; it was giving the Lord too much. That is the reason why Judas took the lead with the other disciples in complaining that Mary was wasting something.

Now we come to the word which I believe the Lord wants to emphasize at this time, the word "waste". What is waste? Waste simply means—amongst other things—giving too much. If a shilling will do, and you give a pound, it is a waste. If two ounces will do, and you give a kilogram, it is a waste. If one day will finish the work, and you take five days or a week, it is a waste. A waste means that you give something too much for something too little. A waste means that someone is receiving something, who is not worth so much. That is a waste. But we are dealing here with something which the Lord said had to go out with the Gospel, wherever the Gospel should be told. He wants the preaching of the Gospel to issue in something along the lines of the action of Mary here—that is, that people should come to Him and waste themselves on Him. That is what He is after.

THE REACTION OF JUDAS AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

We must look at this question of wasting on the Lord from two angles, one taken from Judas and the other from the other disciples. You know they all thought it a waste. To Judas, who had never called our Lord "the Lord", everything that was poured out upon Him was waste. Not only ointment was waste, but even water would have been waste. To the world, the service of the Lord and our giving ourselves over to Him is a pure waste. He has never been loved, He has never had a place in the hearts of the world, so any giving over to Him is a waste. Many say, Such and such a man could make good in the world if he were not a Christian! People think that, because someone is serving the Lord and because that someone has some natural talent or something in the world, it is a waste for that one to be a Christian, to serve the Lord. They think such people are really too good for the Lord! They think it is a waste.

Let me give a personal instance. Many years ago I returned from Shanghai to my own home town. One day I was walking along the street, leaning on

a stick—I was not very strong—and I met one of my old College professors on the street. He took me into a teashop where we sat down. He looked at me from head to foot and from foot to head, and then he said: "Now look here, during your college days we thought a good deal of you and we had great hopes for you. We thought you were going to be something, to be someone. Do you mean to say you are still like this?" Looking at me with piercing eyes, he asked that very pointed question. I must confess that, on hearing this, my first reaction was that I would almost like to cry, to weep. My health had gone, everything had gone, and here was my old professor, who taught me law in the school, asking me, "You are still like this? No progress, nothing. And the very next moment—I have to confess that in all my life it was the first time—I really knew what it meant to have the Spirit of Glory resting upon me. The Spirit of Glory, nothing short of the Spirit of Glory, was on me then. I could look up and say, "Lord, I praise Thee! This is the best thing and the best line I have ever chosen!" To the professor it was a total waste to serve the Lord; but that is what the Gospel is after—giving everything to the Lord.

Judas felt it was a waste. 'We could manage better with the money by using it in some other way. There are a lot of poor people. We could give it for charity, we could do some social service, we could help people in a more practical way. Why pour it down at the feet of Jesus? Can you not find a better employment of your life? Can you not do something better with yourself?' That is what Judas was thinking, and that is what the world is thinking. 'It is too much to give yourself to the Lord'. But no: when once our eyes have been opened as to the worth of the Lord, nothing is too good for Him.

But I do not want to dwell too much on Judas' reaction. I want to go on to see what the reaction of the other disciples was, because that affects us more than Judas. We do not greatly mind what the world is saying, but we do mind very much what the other disciples are saying, who ought to have understood and yet who did not. They said the same thing as Judas, and they not only said it, they were moved with indignation, they were angry, they thought it a waste. They said, 'You ought to have sold this ointment for three hundred pence and given it to the poor!'

'USE' AND 'SERVICE'

Let me illustrate. Has someone been telling you that you are wasting your time by sitting still and not doing much? They say, Here are people who

ought to go out in this kind of work and that kind of work. They could be used to help this group of people, and the other group of people! The whole idea is *use*. But no, brethren, that is not what the Lord is after. The Lord wants us to be used, yes. But what He is after is this, that you pour out all you have, yourself, unto Him, and if that is all, that is enough. It is not a question of whether the poor have been helped or not. The question is, Has the Lord been satisfied? It is not *working for* Him, my friends, it is *service to* Him, it is ministering *to* Him. Praise the Lord, that is what He is after—that I give Him my all, even though people say, ‘You are doing nothing!’ My service to the Lord is not on commercial lines. No, my service to the Lord is to please Him.

There is many a meeting we could go and take, many a convention where we could minister, many a conference we could lead, and many a campaign in which we might have a share. It is not that you are not able to do it. You are able to do it; you could be used to the full. But the Lord is not concerned that you should be used that much, or that you have been used up to that much. That is not what He is after. It is not that my usefulness should be brought to the full. No, the Lord is after my position before His feet, and my anointing of His head. Whatever I have as an alabaster box—the most precious thing, the thing dear to me, my whole life, the inner working of the Cross and the outflow of a life that is produced by the Cross—I give that all up to the Lord. It seems as if it is a waste, but that is what He is after. Sometimes the giving to Him will be in tireless service, but sometimes He may suspend the service in order to discover whether it is it or Himself.

Have you ever given too much to the Lord? May I tell you something? One thing some of us have come to learn is this. In Divine service, the principle of waste is the principle of power. The principle of usefulness is the very principle of scattering. The real usefulness in the hand of God is waste. The more you think you could do, the more you employ your gifts up to the very limit—and some even over the limit—you will find that it is the principle of the world, it is not the principle of the Lord.

There are those who have been very concerned with some dear servants of the Lord, and think they are not doing enough. They could do far more if they could get in somewhere and get in somehow, be used in a far greater way! I knew a sister in the Lord—she is now with the Lord—for quite a long time. I think she is the one by whom I have been helped the most. She was used of the Lord in a

very real way during those years when I was associated with her. The one concern in my heart was this: She is not used! Constantly I said to myself, ‘Why does she not get out and take some meetings, get somewhere, do something? It is a waste to live in that small village without anything happening!’ Sometimes, when I went to see her, I almost shouted at her. I said, ‘No one knows the Lord as you do. You know the Book in a most living way. Do you not see the need around? Why don’t you do something? It is a waste of time, a waste of energy, a waste of money, a waste of everything, just sitting here and doing nothing!’

But that is the thing the Lord is after. It is not just to be moving about and doing everything up to the limit. No. It is that I be willing to give my all to the Lord and be satisfied with my service to Him, not merely to be concerned with work for Him. I do not mean to say that we are going to do nothing, but the first thing is Himself, not His work. So He said, ‘She is doing this for Me.’ Oh, friends, if our eyes could only be opened! The Lord is not after work, so-called. The Lord is after this, that we shall be for Him.

‘ANOINTING HIM BEFOREHAND’

So the Lord said, ‘Why do you trouble her? She has wrought a good work as to Me. The poor you will have always, but you cannot always have Me.’ Of course, we can have a new application of the whole thing here to-day. We all know that, during the Millennium, we shall be called to a greater work. We must not think that, during the Millennium, we shall have nothing to do. The Lord said, ‘Now in the least you have been faithful; then, in the Millennium, more will be entrusted to you.’ So there will be the greater work; so the work will go on, just as we have the poor always. But you cannot always have Him. I believe that during that Day we shall all love as we have never done now, but it will be blessed for those who have poured out their all upon the Lord to-day. When we see Him face to face, I trust that we shall all pour out and break everything for Him. But to-day—we have to do it to-day. Several days after Mary broke the alabaster box of ointment and poured it on His head, there were some women who went early in the morning to anoint the body of the Lord. Did they do it? Did they succeed on the resurrection morning? No, there was only one soul who succeeded in anointing the body of the Lord—Mary, who anointed Him beforehand. The others did not succeed in anointing His body. He had risen. The whole question is, What am I going to do to the Lord to-day?

It seems as if man will say it is too much to be given over to Him. Man will say that I am wasting my life, man will say this or that ; but let us say, 'Lord, nothing is too good for Thee.' Someone once said to me, 'Our giving over to the Lord shows how much we think that He is worth'. I believe that. If the Lord is worthy, then how can it be a waste? He is worthy to be so served. He is worthy for me to be His prisoner, He is worthy for me just to live for Him. He is worthy. What the world may say does not matter. The Lord says, 'Do not trouble her.' So let us not be troubled. Men may say anything they like, but we can stand on this ground, that the Lord said, 'It is a good work. Every true work is not done on the poor ; every true work is done to Me.' The Lord will recognise that it is for Him ; the Lord will say, 'That is good.' We do not mind the Judases and we do not mind the world.

Have our eyes been opened to see the preciousness of the One whom we are serving? Have we come to see that nothing less than the deepest, the most precious, and the costliest will satisfy Him? Have we come to see that working for the poor, working for the souls of men, working for the benefit of the world, working for the benefit of the eternal good of the sinner, can never be compared with our working done to the Lord? The Lord has to open our eyes to see His worth. If here is something very precious, and I pay one thousand, ten thousand, a million pounds for it, can you say it is a waste? The idea of waste will only come when we under-estimate the Lord. The whole point is, how much is the Lord to us? When the Lord is really precious to our souls, nothing will be too good, nothing will be too costly ; everything we have, the deepest, the most precious thing, we give to Him, and we will not say it is a shameful thing that we should give such a gift. But if we do not think much of Him, then anything will be a waste.

"WHAT SHE COULD"

Then the Lord said this: "She hath done what she could." What does that mean? It means that Mary has given up her all. That is all she could do, no more, and she did it ; and the Lord will not be satisfied with anything less than 'we have done what we could'. I do not mean our energy in trying to do something. That is not the point here. The whole point is a life really laid at the feet of the Lord, and that in view of His death, His burial ; in view of a future day. On that day His burial was in view. To-day it is the Crowning Day that is

in view—the Lord Jesus in glory—that Day upon which He will be pronounced and declared to be the Christ of God, the Anointed One. But it is a precious thing, a far more precious thing to Him that we should anoint Him now—not with any material oil, but with something deep. Everything outward is taken away ; now comes the alabaster flask, the deepest—something you cherish like the alabaster flask, and you do not want to break it. It comes from the heart, from the very depth of your being. You come to the Lord with that, and pour it out and say, 'Lord, here it is. It is all Yours, because You are worthy!' May the Lord get anointing from us to-day.

THE LORD'S SATISFACTION

Then the Lord said, 'Wherever the Gospel shall be preached, this story shall be told'. Why? Because the Gospel is meant to produce this. That is what the Gospel is after. The Gospel is not to satisfy sinners. Praise the Lord, sinners will be satisfied! But the Gospel is not preached so that sinners may be satisfied. The Gospel is preached so that the Lord may be satisfied. It is for His satisfaction. I am afraid we lay too much emphasis on the good of sinners and we have not seen enough of what the Lord is after. We have been thinking how the sinners will fare if there is no Gospel, but that is not the thing. Praise the Lord, the sinner has his part ; God will give him something. But this is not the most important thing. The whole thing is this, that everything should be to the satisfaction of the Son of God ; satisfaction to Him, and not to sinners. It is only when He is satisfied that we shall be satisfied. I have never met a soul who has satisfied the Lord and has not been satisfied himself. It is impossible. We have to satisfy Him first, and He will never be satisfied without our wasting ourselves upon Him.

Once more let me repeat. The whole question before us is simply this. It seems as if I am giving too much for something too little. That is waste. To come down to practical issues : have you not felt that way? You say, I have given up a position, I have given up my ministry, I have given up a certain bright future, possibilities, and now I try to serve the Lord. Sometimes it seems that the Lord hears me, and sometimes I have no definite answer. I go on with the Lord—and then I compare myself with that other fellow who is in a certain big system. He has a very bright future, he has never given it up ; he continues on and he serves the Lord ; he has got souls saved, the Lord blesses his ministry. What do I get out of this? He is pros-

perous—I do not mean to say materially, but spiritually. He looks more like a Christian than I do, so happy, so satisfied. He has a good time, I have all the bad time. I have all sorts of complications coming to me! The other one loves the Lord just as I do. He has not gone this way, but he has got lots of things, so-called spiritual prosperity, which I have not got.

Now, am I not wasting my time? What is it? I have really given too much! Here is the problem. I think that if I just follow this one's steps—if I only just consecrate myself enough for the blessing, but not enough for the trouble; if I just consecrate myself enough for the Lord to use me, to be a useful one, but not consecrate myself enough for the Lord to shut me up—it will be perfectly all right. But the principle of waste is a principle that satisfies the heart of the Lord Jesus. You can be used, and in fact you can make of your consecration this and that, but real satisfaction to the heart of the Son of God can only be when we are really, as people would think, 'wasting' ourselves upon Him. It seems as if you are giving too much and getting nothing—and that is the secret of pleasing God.

Oh, friends, what are we after? Are we after 'usefulness', as those disciples were? They wanted to make every penny of that three hundred pence go to its full length. The whole question was 'usefulness' to God. The Lord waits to hear us say, 'Lord, I do not mind that. If I can only please Thee, that is enough.'

"THE HOUSE WAS FILLED WITH THE ODOUR"

That breaking of the alabaster flask, and that anointing of the Lord, filled the house with the sweetest odour. Everyone could smell it. Whenever you meet someone who has really suffered, been limited, gone through things for the Lord; not trying to come up to the surface to be used, so to speak, but willing to be imprisoned by the Lord, willing just to be satisfied with the Lord and nothing else; immediately you smell something, you scent out something. There is a savour of the Lord. Something has been crushed there, something has been broken there, so you smell the odour. The odour that filled the house that day still finds the Church to-day; Mary's fragrance never passes. It needed but one stroke to break the flask for the Lord; but that breaking and that anointing abides.

We have been talking about what we are, not what we do, not what we preach. Some of us may have been asking the Lord for a long time that He

will be pleased to use us in such a way as to be able to impart impressions of Himself to others; not exactly preaching or teaching, but to be able, during our touch with others, to impart God, to impart the presence of God, the sense of God. Friends, we cannot produce the impressions of God upon others without having the breaking of everything, even the most precious thing, at the feet of the Lord Jesus. If you have that, you may not be used in an outward way, but people will scent you out. The most delicate saint in the Body could find you out; they would sense, 'That is one who has gone with the Lord, who has suffered, who has not moved freely, who knows how to be willing to let go everything for the Lord.' That creates impressions, and impressions create hunger, and hunger provokes to go on seeking and have revelation and be brought into fullness of life. The Lord does not set us here first of all to preach, or to do any work for Him. The first thing for which He sets us here is to create hunger in others. No true work will ever begin without a sense of need being created. We cannot inject that into others; we cannot drive people to be hungry. That hunger has to be created, and that hunger can be created only by those who carry the impressions of God.

I always like to think of that woman speaking of the prophet. She did not know him very well, but she said, 'I can see he is a man of God!' It was not what the prophet said; she could see. What are people sensing about us? We may leave many impressions; we may leave the impression that we are clever, that we are this or that. But no, that one left the impression that he was a man of God.

This leaving of an impression upon others is based on this, that there is a definite working of the Cross with regard to the pleasure of the heart of God. I seek the pleasure of the Lord; I seek to please Him, and I do not mind how much it costs me. I knew a sister once, who was having a little difficulty with the Lord, and she prayed like this. 'Lord, please do not give in. I confess I cannot give in—but please don't You give in. Just wait, Lord—I will give in.' She did not want the Lord to give in. Once I prayed with her, and she said, 'Lord, I am breaking my heart so that I can please Thy heart', and it was true.

There must be something—a breaking, a willingness to give over—and that something will produce a sense of need in other lives to bring them further on to know the Lord. What I feel in my own heart is this. The Gospel has one object in view, that is, to produce in us a condition that will please the Lord. And, in order to please the Lord,

we come to Him with all that we have, that we are, even the deepest, the most cherished things in our hearts, and we make known to Him: 'Lord, I am willing to let go all these things for Your sake—not for Your work, or anything else, but for Yourself!'

Oh, to be wasted! It is a blessed thing to be wasted. So many who have been prominent in the Christian world know nothing about being wasted for the Lord. Many have been used too much, have

been used to the full, but they do not know what it means to be wasted for the Lord. We like to be always on the go. The Lord would like us sometimes to be in the prison. We would like always to be on apostolic journeys—but apostles have their chains.

The Lord grant us grace, so that we may learn how to please Him. If we make that our supreme aim, then the Gospel has achieved its end.

W. N.

WE BEHELD HIS GLORY (CHAPTER III OF VOL. II)

Reading: John xiii. 1-17; Lev. viii. 24; Ex. xxx. 18-21; Rom. vi. 4, viii. 1, 2, 4; I Cor. iii. 3; Eph. iv. 1, 2, v. 2; I John ii. 6.

THERE are several preliminary observations to be made in approaching the message in John xiii.

Firstly, the end of John chapter xii sees the close of the Lord's public ministry. From then onward, He is with His own; and so it is with them that we find Him when we come to chapter xiii.

Secondly, chapters xi and xii having brought right to the fore the whole matter of death and resurrection, as seen in Lazarus and the grain of wheat, chapter xiii indicates what is to obtain on resurrection and ascension ground, because everything is being dealt with here and onward from that standpoint—Christ risen and returning to the Father (vs. 1).

Thirdly, everything is now inward and not outward. So far, it has all been objective; every incident through all these chapters has been in an outward way. From now on it is inward, it is subjective.

Fourthly, it is no longer only individual; it is now corporate.

These four things must be recognised in order to arrive at the full meaning and value of what follows. Thus it is a matter of what the Church is in itself, as on resurrection and ascension ground, for it is the Church which is now represented. Judas is going; Christ is being left alone with those who are to be the nucleus of the Church, and it all becomes a matter of what the Church is in itself, as viewed from the standpoint of Christ's resurrection and ascension, and its union with Him.

He is about to depart out of the world. All things have been given into His hands, and He is seeking to secure the inward ground which will

lead to the fulfilment of the Church's one comprehensive purpose—the continuation of Himself in representation on this earth, the expression of Himself here. He is going, but He is seeking to secure the continuity, the continuation, of Himself here as in His Church. And so, about to depart, He says that He leaves them an example, and when we come to analyse the example, we find that it is something which reaches right down into the innermost motives of the heart. Christ cannot be followed in just an outward way; that is proved. He has to be followed in an inward way.

So, having laid that foundation, we can come to the inclusive message of chapter xiii.

THE IMMENSE IMPORTANCE AND POWER OF MEEKNESS

That which arises is *the immense importance and power of meekness*. Perhaps it has not been sufficiently recognised that the fulfilment by the Church of its great vocation rests and depends upon its meekness. It has a tremendous business on hand, and it has immense forces against it. There is no doubt that the calling of the Church is a very great thing indeed, fraught with unspeakably great issues, and opposed by terrific forces; and to meet all that—the purpose, the vocation, and all the forces of evil—the one basic essential is meekness: because, in the first place, before the Church can get on with its work here in this world it must be in a position where Satan has no ground. Resurrection and ascension imply that; they just carry that with them. Resurrection and ascension mean that the entire ground of Satan has been set aside. The Lord Jesus has gone up on high because He has triumphed. So I repeat that resurrection and ascension just imply that Satan's power and authority have been destroyed and all things are in Christ's hands, not Satan's.

MEEKNESS DESTROYS THE GROUND OF SATAN'S AUTHORITY

The Church must come on to that ground, and we find so impressively—and it is most impressive—that the very first thing introduced on that ground is perhaps the last thing that we would have thought we should meet. When we come on to resurrection and ascension ground, on to the ground of Christ's great triumph and exaltation, we meet meekness, and meekness means that Satan's ground is destroyed, for Satan's fall was due to pride being found in his heart, and man's fall was because he let in that same pride. Pride—to have everything in himself, to be as God, to be himself the seat of knowledge. "Ye shall be as God, *knowing* good and evil" (Gen. iii. 5). Wherever there is pride, Satan has the ground that he wants for destroying and wrecking, and the risen Lord is providing ground against that by this tremendous object-lesson as to meekness. Yes, Satan, sinister, powerful and terrible as he is, can often be completely nullified by a spirit of meekness, his whole ground can be taken from him by a spirit of meekness. The importance and power of meekness is seen, then, firstly in that it destroys the very ground of Satan's authority.

MEEKNESS THE GREAT UNIFYING FACTOR

Then it is seen as the great unifying factor. Judas, the disintegrating factor, has been compelled to withdraw. Satan is going to do his utmost to scatter, divide and disintegrate this band. In view of all that, the Lord, by His example, His acted sermon, is saying, 'For the unifying of the Church, the integrating of the Church, the establishing of the Church as something which cannot be broken up or divided spiritually, the one essential is meekness'. "I . . . beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called, with all lowliness and meekness" (Eph. iv. 1, 2). The message to the Church at Philippi was because of disunity, and the Lord's meekness in self-emptying and humiliation and bond-servant form, His great condescension, is introduced by the Apostle as the ground of the church's salvation at Philippi. The unifying factor is meekness. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. ii. 5).

If we did but know it, a very great deal of the strain that is known by the Lord's people collectively, the postponement of full blessing, the delay in fulfilment of essential purpose, the distress and the heartbreak and the bewilderment, is due to

secret pride. The Lord sees it—unwillingness to let go somewhere, unwillingness to acknowledge somewhere, unwillingness to come down from some position taken as to our rightness. Yes, there is a lot of painful history of that kind, if we did but know it; it can be traced to pride, hidden pride; and the Lord says that the counter to that—to all that delay and postponement, to that arrest, to that threat of the complete disintegration of the Lord's people—is meekness. If that is true, we are right in saying that it is of immense importance and power. None would say that, during the three years with the Master, the Twelve, or even the Eleven, were a unity, and so much was due to rivalry, jealousy, personal interests. These are features of pride.

MEEKNESS THE HALL-MARK OF LOVE

But then there is another thing which comes out here. It is that meekness is the hall-mark of love. You know that John's Gospel can be divided into three sections, under three words—Life, Light and Love, and the love section begins at verse 34 of the thirteenth chapter. "*A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another*". But meekness is the hall-mark of love. Pride and love can never go together. Love and meekness will always be found together if the love is genuine. If the example is to be taken account of—if the Lord Jesus is the great example of love—the argument is just overwhelming. "*Having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them unto the end (or: unto the uttermost) . . . And . . . he took a towel*" (vs. 1, 13).

He loved; we have no doubt about His love, and that He is the supreme example of love. He is equally the supreme example of meekness. These two go together. "*What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt understand hereafter*". What an afterward! This Gospel is being written in the afterward. How does it begin? "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and THE WORD WAS GOD. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made*". "*And he took a towel, and girded himself*".

These disciples really had not grasped the magnitude of the Person who was in their midst. From time to time it came home to them with some force, and they felt that He was more than man. But it had not yet come home to them in fulness who He

was, and it never did until after His resurrection and ascension. When, forty days after His resurrection, He was received up into heaven, and the mighty Holy Spirit came forth into them, then, and then only—but then—they knew in fulness who He was. It overwhelmed them.

And then they had a retrospective contemplation. 'God, very God, who made all things, the Creator of the universe, has been down here and washed our feet!' That is tremendous, is it not? They knew afterward what had happened, they knew afterward the greatness of the condescension of God in the Person of Jesus Christ, and that did have an effect; it was a mighty power in their lives. They may not see eye to eye on all matters. The work in them was not immediately perfected, so that they were in perfect agreement in all interpretations. Peter and Paul may represent different standpoints, and at one time they may clash. Ah, but there is something deeper than that. Peter will say: "our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote unto you" (II Pet. iii. 15). Something deep down has been wrought, and you find them very meek men, and, by their meekness, pillars of the Church. It is significant that when Paul wrote to the Corinthians, dealing with divisions, he said: 'The trouble is with your feet'—"ye . . . walk after the manner of men" (I Cor. iii. 3). John says, 'You must walk as He walked': "he that saith he abideth in him ought himself also to walk even as he walked" (I John ii. 6); not walk as men. It is all here symbolized in the feet being cleansed.

THE WALK OF THE BELIEVER

We can pass now from that to the next thing. The Church's walk in this world is the link. We have read all those passages about the feet and the walk. We are able to see what a large place the walk has in the spiritual life. The Lord Jesus says something very strong about this, "*If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me*"; 'that depends upon your walk, upon your feet'. What does He mean? Well, after all, this washing of feet was the neutralising of the 'earth touch', the contact with the earth—that which lies under the curse, that which God can never accept, that which is completely contrary to God's mind. We have to be here, we have to walk here; but we have to have a great sensitiveness to that earth touch, a great sensitiveness to the dust, a great sensitiveness to dirt.

Some people can bear a lot of dirt without being bothered by it! They are not very sensitive in this matter, and so they are not found washing

very much. There are other people who are very sensitive to the slightest touch of dirt, because they know the danger of contamination. The surgeon is extremely sensitive to dirt; you will constantly see him laboriously 'washing up'. The ordinary person would ask whether all this is quite necessary: is this not overdoing it a bit? There he stands; he goes on scrubbing and washing, rinsing and washing again and scrubbing. But he knows the infinite peril of dirt, of contact with a world that is impregnated with dangerous elements, with another life that is harmful; and he is sensitive to that. The Lord Jesus was extremely sensitive, and He must have suffered terribly, walking, in His sinlessness, on this earth. Here in this chapter He is only saying in a pictorial way, 'You must have a great sensitiveness to the death touch, to the earth touch.'

That will work out in many ways. It will work out as to our conversation. If you and I are really spiritual, really growing in the spiritual life, we shall have violent reactions to our own talk. It will touch us, too, in what we read. It will touch us in all sorts of ways. The point is that there has to be a sensitiveness to that which belongs to the realm on the other side of that Cross, the realm to which we are supposed to have died, and which has nothing in common with this realm of 'walking in newness of life'; yes, a growing sensitiveness, that means pain when there is anything present which the Lord does not accept or agree with. If the Church is going to fulfil its vocation, if the Church is going to be here with the impact of the risen, ascended Lord, it has to be very, very sensitive to what is against the Spirit. And, of course, this has to be true of the individuals who make up the Church.

We have, therefore, little difficulty in seeing why the Church has so little influence and power and effect. It has become so contaminated, and it has lost its sensitiveness to spiritual things. It can allow so much that, from God's standpoint, was put out when the Lord Jesus died. Go back to Aaron and his sons, the priests, and the laver between the altar and the tabernacle, the tent of meeting. "*Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat . . . THAT THEY DIE NOT*" (Ex. xxx. 19). They have to get rid of the death touch—of the earth touch which is the death touch. So the blood was placed on the great toe of the right foot, indicating the whole walk of the servants of God. I think it is unnecessary for us to go further than that. I only call you back to that selection of passages at the head of this chapter, and there are many more about the walk of the believer.

And there is that great inclusive word to the Colossians: "If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. iii, 1-3). There is the great divide of the Cross between earth and heaven. Union with the risen, ascended Lord does mean that there is set up inside the believer, and inside the Church when it is according to the Lord's mind, a faculty for discerning and perceiving what is and what is not of the Lord; what belongs to this new realm and what does not belong to it; and the development of that faculty is the way of the Church's increasing spiritual life and power, as it is of the individual's.

THE WASHING OF ONE ANOTHER'S FEET

Then, finally, as to this matter of feet-washing. "Ye also ought to wash one another's feet". We do not take that literally; we know that the whole thing here is symbolical. But there it is—something that we ought to do. 'We also ought to wash one another's feet'. What does it mean?

It is a picture again. "Brethren, . . . if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of meekness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. vi. 1). It is the spirit of meekness helping the one who has become touched, tainted, or overtaken in the way. This one is in the way, and there creeps up something to corrupt or pollute, and overtakes him; his feet are caught. Now, "ye which are spiritual", wash his feet, help him out of that, help him to get free. I think we more often point out the dirt than wash it off. We are far more ready to criticize our brother for his fault or faults than to set ourselves to help him to get rid of them. Washing of the feet surely does just mean making it our humble business, in all lowliness and meekness, knowing our own frailty and weakness, to help to remove that which we see as a defect, a fault, a wrong, an evil, in our brother.

Well, that covers a lot of ground, and I am not going to stay longer with this matter of feet-washing, but it is something that the Lord has said is to be a ministry in the Church, if the Church is to be kept in purity; something that we have to do. It is what Paul calls "speaking the truth in love" (Eph. iv. 15)—in love being faithful with one another. That is feet-washing. It may sometimes be hot water, it may sometimes need a little caustic—but the balm of love must be there.

Have we established our statement as to the immense importance and power of meekness? If I were to go back and underline anything that has been said, I think I should underline mainly that part about spiritual sensitiveness to the touch of that which has in it the power of death and disintegration. It comes so subtly, just a suggestion. We have only to hint at something about a fellow-believer, about another Christian, and it becomes something which works and grows. The enemy is just looking for the slightest thing like that, to build it up, and before long that which was only a hint or a suggestion about them has involved their whole life in a black cloud, and they become suspect and wholly unclean, and you begin to avoid them. It is only one of the many ways in which you and I are called upon to be sensitive to dust, to dirt. We are moving in a very unclean world, naturally and spiritually. It is so easy for us to be affected, and we must have this sensitiveness to dirt to get rid of it in order to maintain a healthy, living body.

One of the books which perhaps has, by way of illustration, helped me most in this whole realm of spiritual sensitiveness, is *The Life of Lord Lister*. It is the story of the man who was largely responsible for that whole science of antiseptics, the great warfare against the deadly microbe. What a story it is! And the story opens with the battle that he had to wage, and what a battle was waged against him! You could hardly imagine a surgeon coming in to perform a major operation in an old dirty coat that he had been wearing doing all sorts of other things, then going from that operation, with all its blood on him, to perform another one, and so on. We are not surprised that the hospitals themselves were scenes of more mortality than the outside world. What a battle! His whole theory was laughed at, scorned, ridiculed. He had to fight this battle through, but it was won.

We know to-day the importance of washing. The Lord Jesus knew all about it; they did not know. This greater than Lister knew all about that counterpart, that antitype, of contamination, when He, coming into a universe impregnated with these evil germs working death and havoc, said, 'We must wash up before we touch anything.' So He said to the Church, as the first thing upon a resurrection-ascension basis: 'Let us get down to wash the point of contact with this world, and break that contact, get clean and clear of it'. Our whole vocation and testimony hangs upon that.

T. A-S.

“A DISPENSATION OF GOD WHICH IS IN FAITH”

“As I exhorted thee to tarry at Ephesus, when I was going into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge certain men not to teach a different doctrine, neither to give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questionings, rather than a dispensation of God which is in faith . . .” (I Timothy i. 3, 4).

THIS letter to Timothy places tremendous emphasis on faith. The whole dispensation of God's purposes seems to depend upon it. For his own part, Paul reminded Timothy of how, as Saul of Tarsus, he had hindered those purposes and sought to destroy them, all because of the ignorance of unbelief. Such an interference with God's purposes is not limited to the unsaved, for Paul wrote also of those who had truly emerged from the ranks of these, and were now believers in Christ, and who yet had “*made shipwreck concerning the faith*” (i. 19). He told of the tragedy caused by self-interest and love of gain, “*which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith*” (vi. 10), and closed the letter with a warning concerning some who had “*missed the mark concerning the faith*” (vi. 21).

We must remember that these warnings and exhortations were written to a tried and experienced servant of the Lord, for obviously even he could take nothing for granted, but must be very resolute about this matter. “*This charge I commit unto thee, my child Timothy, . . . that . . . thou mayest war the good warfare; holding faith . . .*” (i. 18, 19). Really to be a “*man of God*” one must “*fight the good fight of the faith*” (vi. 11, 12). There is clearly a need for strong and sustained faith. This is not new to us, and none will dispute it. What we may have failed to realise, though, is the particular association of faith with this “*dispensation of God*” (i. 4).

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS DISPENSATION

Some of us may feel that we know all about “dispensations”, and immediately jump to the conclusion that in this case it refers to the time in which we live, as being that special era when men are saved by faith. In some measure this may be so, but were men ever saved by anything other than faith? It is true that, when they lived under the law, they were called upon to express their faith by certain requirements which no longer hold good; but they were never saved by the law. Salvation has never been on any other grounds

than that of grace through faith. The term “dispensation”, then, must mean more than this. It may be argued that it refers to the present period, as being the time when men have to trust concerning the invisible rather than in what can be seen, that it is faith as opposed to sight, an era in which we must learn to live, not by what is visible but by the unseen realities which can only be grasped by faith. This, indeed, is very true, and it is a truth which will explain much, and help us in our walk with the Lord and work for Him. Nevertheless it seems clear that Paul was not using the term in this connection, and laid no special stress on the matter of times and seasons.

Perhaps it will be clearer to us if we understand that the word “dispensation” refers primarily to an order or a régime. There is a realm in which we can live, in which we should live, where all our behaviour and relationships are adjusted to a divine pattern. It is a régime which is all of God, and it can only be sensed and experienced by active faith in Him. Literally the term “dispensation” speaks of an order or arrangement, especially in a household. God's intention is that this régime of His house should provide a very practical experience for all believers, that they should know themselves to be part of a Divine order in which He expresses His will, and learn to live in it by faith. When, in his second letter to this same Timothy, Paul claimed to have “kept the faith”, was he not referring to the basis on which he had lived his life? It was not merely that he had remained orthodox (there never seems to have been any great temptation for him to do otherwise), but that he had seen and entered into this heavenly order or economy, and by God's grace, nothing had been able to turn aside his faith from a wholehearted conformity to it.✽

THE FACT OF A DIVINE ORDER

Now the first thing that faith must do is recognise that there is such a Divine order of things, a realm of life, an economy of corporate living, which is of God. Ignoring for the moment those questions as to when it will be or where it can be found; whether it is now, on earth, or whether it can only be later in heaven; we need first of all to be convinced of the fact that the Lord both desires and has made provision for a relationship of men together in a régime which is wholly of Himself. Even the most ardent sectarian must expect one day to arrive at the place where there will be no more sects. Even the most com-

plaining and disaffected Christian must believe that one day he will discover the place where everything is all right. Yes, there is, there must be, a dispensation, an order of things, which is altogether as God wants it.

Paul uses this very term "dispensation" in connection with his conception of God's greatest purpose, saying that He intends, in "*a dispensation of the fulness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ*" (Eph. i. 10). God has planned that there shall be a heavenly state of society in which everything is of Christ and for Christ; moreover He has made provision, by redemption, for the realisation of this plan. Where does faith come in over this matter? Does it merely assert that somewhere, somehow, in the vague future, it will happen? That is neither very practical, nor does it involve anything much in the nature of conflict. But suppose that it lays hold now of the divine reality, and even now affirms that there is such a divine order to be entered into and to be governed by? Suppose that it prays with real expectation, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"? For that it will indeed have to "war the good warfare".

PERSONAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE DIVINE ORDER

The next question to ask, then, is not whether there is such a dispensation, such a realm; *there is*. The question is, What does that order mean to me? what is my place? how do I fit in? The dispensation came in at Pentecost, and it came in in answer to prayer. This prayer was not that of the apostles, though they did pray and wait, and their prayers were answered. The prayer which lies at the back of Pentecost is that which is recorded in John chapter xvii. Let us be clear: this was not an exhortation to Christians to try to live in unity. Some people may preach when they are supposed to be praying, but the Lord Jesus never did that. This was pure prayer. He was voicing a definite and specific request to His Father: He asked the Father for a company of people for Himself, who would live in this world and yet not belong to it.

The prayer itself defies analysis. Sometimes it seems to be spoken before Calvary, and at others as though the Cross were already passed. There are times when the Speaker seems to be on the earth, and others when He seems to be already in heaven. The truth is that His prayer took Him outside of time and space, into the eternal realm where men may live in a perfect union of life and love with the Father and the Son, and with one another in the Father and in the Son. He asked

God for such a people, and His prayer was answered. On the day of Pentecost, God gave them to Him. On that day there was inaugurated the dispensation, the régime, which only faith can at present perceive, but which exists so far as the Spirit of God is concerned, and makes its own challenge to us and demands upon us. It exists, and we have a place in it.

Our difficulty is that, as soon as such a community is mentioned, we begin to look around in enquiry as to where, if anywhere, it can be found. Our tendency, when we are dissatisfied with things as they are in the present "dispensations", is to long for that better régime which is all of God, and then to run around looking for it, or trying to set it up. That is the reaction of the natural heart, but it is not the response of faith. Faith must first believe that it is, and then seek to find its place within it, for it is a realm which has its own laws and principles; we do not have to make them, we have to recognise what they are and to be governed by them.

Many of us who really belong to the "household of God" (Eph. ii. 19) have often failed to abide in our true sphere, and, without so intending, have in fact been 'disorderly'. It is as though we were unreliable members of a household, who might be in or who might be out, sometimes lending a hand and taking our part as members of the family, but as often dashing off somewhere else without a word to anyone. We are like those who, from time to time, suddenly appear on the scene, and in their efforts to be helpful get thoroughly in the way and make a nuisance of themselves; who have the best intentions, but are undisciplined and unreliable. We all need to have a new understanding of the Spirit's desire to fit us in to this Divine order, this spiritual economy of the house of God which truly expresses Christ. He will certainly do this for us, if we accept the conditions, and commit ourselves in faith to Him.

FAITH IN RELATION TO THE DIVINE ORDER

Such a committal demands a very active exercise of faith. This dispensation of God can only be perceived, only entered into, and certainly only persisted in, if we have an unusual confidence in the sovereign power of God. Those who seek to be true to the Lord in this realm of the Spirit's government, have no need to be told what Paul meant when he urged Timothy to "fight the good fight of the faith", for they know what a fight it is.

We need to know the basis for this faith, for faith must always be founded on the Word of God.

We cannot decide what to believe ; we can only receive what God says is the truth, and trust Him to make it good. In this particular matter it seems that there is a definite statement of the Word which calls for our faith. It is the assertion: "*For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body*" (1 Cor. xii. 13). This baptism is stated as something which the Lord has already done. He does not invite us to do it for Him, nor to help Him to do it ; neither does He expect us to pray or wait until He does it. What He expects of us is that we will recognise the truth and bow to all of its implications. It is an inclusive statement: "all" ; and it speaks of a definitely completed act: "were . . . baptized into one body".

In our personal life with the Lord, everything is made to depend on a past and finished event—the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus. The crux of the whole matter of personal power and holiness is to know when we died and when we rose again. It is useless to seek deliverance from the old life by self-effort, or indeed to try to crucify ourselves ; it is equally useless to try to lift ourselves up on to a new level, or to try to get from God some new and personal experience apart from the sharing of Christ's risen life. Spiritual emancipation and spiritual power are ours when we come to rest on what is full and final so far as God is concerned: namely, that we died when Christ died, and that, when He rose to newness of life, we too rose to share that same life. We are not called on to believe that God *will do* something, but rather to recognise what He *has done*, and then we need all our faith to live in the good of that completed work.

Now if we pass from this personal realm into the sphere of our life together in the Body of Christ, again we may ask, When did this take place? What is the historical fact upon which our faith is to be based? Is not the answer that it was on the day of Pentecost that we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body? We may, of course, ask how we could possibly have been spiritually constituted in a life together when we were not even born, let alone saved. We have often asked the same question with regard to the individual being crucified with Christ, buried with Him and then raised together with Him. There is no end to such questions. Paul urged Timothy to get away from endless questionings to the dispensation of God which is not in reason but in faith. We shall never get anywhere with intellectual questions. This fact of the spiritual dispensation is presented to us for submission, acceptance and the obedience of faith.

Faith is not the easy way ; it is the hard way. It

is always easier to try to do something ourselves, than it is to wait for God to do it, and to order our behaviour on an active expectation that He will. It is because of incomplete faith that so often, as soon as people have caught a glimpse of what the Church should really be, they have hurried off to try to find and join what looks most like it, or else have tried to arrange with others to constitute such an expression of the truth. The matter should have begun to work inwardly first. It is no use our feeling that we have been called on to set up such a dispensation, thinking that to do so we must leave everything and everybody else and initiate something which will better express the spiritual character of the Church. We have to realise that this Church was initiated and constituted by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost ; He has made the dispensation, and now calls upon us by faith to accept all its implications. Nothing can be done if we approach this matter from the outside ; everything waits for individuals to take up the challenge of faith, and to ask the Lord to fit them into the spiritual structure of His house, accepting this divine regime wholeheartedly and with a willingness to be governed in all things by its laws and principles.

It is for this reason that Paul wrote of the house of God as something which really exists, and sent instructions to Timothy as to "*how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God. . . .*" (1 Tim. iii. 15). It is in this respect that we need instruction ; not as to how we may build or bring about the house of God, or as to where we may find it, but rather as to how we need to behave ourselves as being truly in it—for we are in it, so far as God is concerned. The man who commits himself utterly to the Lord in this matter will find, to his surprise, how much real faith it requires ; and he will find too, that far from being unpractical, this faith-life will keep him very close indeed to realities.

FAITH IN THE HOLY SPIRIT'S GOVERNMENT

There is no more practical book in the Bible than that of the Acts. It is the story of men who did not merely perceive the theory of this dispensation of the Spirit, but who found their whole lives governed, checked, and if necessary broken and re-constituted, all according to the new regime into which they had been baptized. What days of fullness they were! There was no question then of people losing their own identity, or the value of their personal anointing and gift, because of their obedience to the principles of God's house. On the

contrary, they found their personal fullness by living in the realm where Christ is all. We cannot explain their amazing fruitfulness of life and ministry merely by saying that they had some personal and isolated experience of the baptism of the Spirit. No, they were all baptized by the Spirit into the one Body. The truth was that they were living right at the heart and centre of a Divine order, administered by the Holy Spirit, and so long as they stayed there by faith, and so long as by faith they were obedient to its laws, there could not be anything other than fullness.

We cannot but be struck by the constant references to the apostles in the early chapters of the Acts. What does this mean? If all the believers were full of the Holy Spirit, enjoying a personal experience of liberty and ministry, why should the overshadowing presence of the apostles be everywhere so apparent? Was this another officialdom? Had the people been delivered from the tyranny of the priests and scribes only to come under the government of other men—better men, it is true, but still only men? Or were these apostles elected representative members of the church, who had been formally chosen to order their affairs? If they were none of these things, what were they?

Surely they were simply means by which God emphasized that this dispensation really is a dispensation and not a haphazard disorder; a spiritual cosmos and not a chaos; an ordered realm which is administered by the government of the Holy Spirit. The apostles did not contradict this government of the Spirit, but provided the Lord's means for expressing it, being also themselves strictly checked and ruled by the Spirit. For the moment, however, we shall not treat of the position of the apostles, but rather concentrate on how this government worked among the people as a whole. Particularly we want to see how much faith was needed by those concerned in order to experience this government

THE FAITH OF BARNABAS

Let us take one of the first individuals to be thus involved—Barnabas. The apostles gave him this name, which means "Son of exhortation". To us the term "son" rather conveys a hint of condescension to a younger and less experienced man, but there was no thought of this with the apostles; rather did they indicate in this way that he was an outstandingly gifted man. It is possible that they recognised that in this work of consolation or exhortation he was the equal, and perhaps the superior, of most of the Twelve. Be that as it may, there is no question that he was a man of educa-

tion, of property and of position—a Levite and a landowner. He was one of the first to give glad submission to the Spirit's government, selling all that he had and giving it to the Lord. But have we noticed what he did with the proceeds of the sale? "He brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet". Did he really think that Peter and John were better administrators than he? Surely not. There can be no doubt that socially, intellectually and probably in business capacity, he was far superior to the Twelve. He could easily have used the money for the Lord, starting some mission of his own, or initiating with it some work which was not directly under the government of the Twelve, but he did not do so. He was not trying to run 'a house for the Lord', but had been placed by the baptism of the Spirit into "The house of the Lord". His action was not based on his trust in the apostles as men, but in implicit faith that they were all part of one divine economy which was ruled by the Spirit.

Had Barnabas looked too closely at the human elements in the Twelve, he might well have found it impossible so to act; and indeed we shall always be stumbled if we get involved with men as men. We need a new basis of confidence that the Holy Spirit is the custodian of the Divine interests of God's house, that He is active in His jealousy for them, and that we can safely commit ourselves, not to men, but to Him. Some might have thought that, by doing this, Barnabas would be limiting his own ministry and sacrificing his personal values for Christ. The answer to that fear can be found as the story unfolds: for we find that from this moment he seemed to increase in stature and influence. Far from coming into limitation, he found increasing fullness—but he found it by being subject to the principles of the house. It is even possible that the quarrel at Antioch might have been avoided if he had continued in the same faith, and that on that occasion something was lost—though we are not specifically told this—because of personal considerations being given a place. Perhaps it is better not to speculate.

THE FAITH OF STEPHEN

The next man who claims our attention is Stephen. In his case we are on surer ground, than in the case of Barnabas, if we assert that he was certainly head and shoulders above all the apostles in his ability to expound the Word. It is doubtful whether any other man could have convinced Saul of Tarsus, as Stephen seems to have done. Stephen was a man mighty both in natural endowments and ability, and also by the anointing power of

the Spirit, and he was humbly aware of it. Even so, he permitted himself to be called in to help in a matter which was admittedly too material to occupy the time of men who had a ministry in the Word. There was a quarrel between the Hebrew and Greek-speaking Jews with regard to the widows' charity. It was not a major business matter in the Church, but a paltry wrangle which had all the elements of pettiness. No wonder the apostles said that they would not waste their valuable time on it. But poor Stephen was asked to waste *his* time on it! How many men in his circumstances would have taken offence, would have left Jerusalem with the grievance that there was no place for their ministry in that church! Stephen accepted the task, not because it gave him an honoured position as deacon—it did not—but because he had implicit faith that the Holy Spirit would take care of his ministry in the Word, if he submitted to His government and left the consequences with the Lord.

What a snare it is to become assertive or jealous about what we call 'our ministry'! How much safer and better to take our place in the Spirit's economy, and trust Him with all those problems. "Foolish questionings", wrote Paul (Tit. iii. 9); "questionings, instead of a dispensation of God which is in faith". Stephen was a man delivered from questionings, not because he had such faith in the apostles, but because he knew that he had been brought into something so much bigger than the apostolic band or the Jerusalem church; he was in that great administration of the Spirit where his true ministry would be safeguarded if only he went on faithfully with the next humble and helpful task that came to hand. And his faith was fully justified. Although Stephen's course was a short one, it was so glorious that all have envied him in his victory and his crown. Yet how little did he know what would be the outcome of his simple willingness to "serve tables"! Truly this dispensation can only be operative when men live on a basis of faith.

THE FAITH OF PHILIP

The next man on the list is Philip. Perhaps with him the issue is not so striking or so clear-cut, but it was essentially the same. Like Stephen, he passed from serving tables to a much wider and more important ministry, with a tremendous seal from God on his labours. Philip might have been excused if he had regarded the movement at Samaria as his own special work, given him by the Lord and not to be interfered with by others. He, too, had to learn to live by faith in a realm much larger than the personal; and he was able to do so, as witness

his standing aside to make way for Peter and John, and then his willingness to go right away to an entirely different and less sensational task. He was neither setting up a house for God, nor inviting God to take a share in his house, but was living in submission to the dispensation of God's house. If we enquire as to whether his obedience was justified, we can only point out that many years later Paul and his party found much in common with Philip, for they made a long stay in his home at Caesarea (Acts xxi. 8, 10). If Paul enjoyed staying with him, it seems to suggest that Philip had not lost any of his spiritual vitality and strength.

These examples should be enough to show us what a strong faith this manner of life demands. Far from being a passive rôle which makes one a mere cipher, it is a life which needs the most virile and constant faith, one which is constantly involved in 'fighting the good fight of faith'. The letter to Timothy brought news of believers who, in contrast to these who triumphed, for various reasons just could not stand up to the test, and lost out with the Lord. The "dispensation" was too rigorous for them.

THE SPIRITUAL POWER OF THIS ORDER

If we turn from the experience of individual members to consider the corporate expression of this dispensation, we are at once struck by its tremendous spiritual power. As the saints lived together in this Divine order, almost anything seemed possible. They had amazing answers to their prayers—not because the prayers were especially wonderful, but because of the spiritual standing which they had in Christ. Prayer is frequently not a question of spending a lot of time, or working up to a great excitement, but of simple utterances from those who are in touch with the Throne. Probably Elijah's experience on Mt. Carmel is a great example of this truth. The false prophets prayed to Baal instead of to Jehovah, but in any case their prayers would have been vain, for they were just the excited expressions of men trying to work up something, crying louder and louder, getting into a frenzy, and feeling that as a result of all this supplication something was bound to happen. It is not impossible for Christians to-day to fall into the same error, thinking that loud and long prayers, with earnestness and vehemence to the point of hysteria, will 'bring the blessing down'. How different it was when Elijah stood forth, and in a few simple words spoke to God. He prayed with the authority of a man in close touch with his Lord, and at his simple request the fire fell.

We must remember that in New Testament days the Pharisees were not a prayerless people—far from it. If anybody knew how to pray, it was they. Long prayers, loud prayers, high-sounding prayers, prayers which surpassed anything which their contemporaries could pray—they prayed all these; but nothing ever happened. Think, then, of the Lord Jesus, the great embodiment of the “Dispensation of God” in His time on earth, and how mighty was the effect of His praying. He only had to lift up His voice in thanksgiving, and the tomb opened for Lazarus to emerge. He only had to ask, “Father, glorify thy name” (John xii. 28),

and the very heavens moved to answer. When the Lord Jesus ascended, the Spirit was sent to inaugurate this Divine order in the Church, baptizing believers into this same sphere of resistless spiritual energy. Their recorded prayers were brief, but they were very mighty. It is true that they did once plan to have a whole night of prayer, but they did not complete it. When they were half-way through, the answer came knocking at the door in the person of Peter.

Yes, there is such a régime, even now. The dispensation is on. It is on now. May we have faith to play our part in it.

H. F.

VESSELS OF MINISTRY

“Moreover the tabernacle and all THE VESSELS OF THE MINISTRY he sprinkled in like manner with the blood” (Heb. ix. 21).

IN thinking about that phrase, “the vessels of the ministry”, I am impressed with the largeness of the number of vessels that there were connected with the tabernacle. Here there is an inclusive reference—“all the vessels of the ministry”, all the vessels of the tabernacle. If you look at the record of the making of the tabernacle, you will find that there were many vessels, and every major part of the tabernacle had its own vessels. Reference is made to the altar and all its vessels, the laver and its vessels, the table of shewbread and its vessels, the candlestick or lampstand and its vessels. The number is not given, but “all its vessels” is a common phrase, and sometimes their particular use is mentioned. For instance, as to the table of shewbread, strangely enough, it says that all the vessels, made of gold, were for pouring out (Ex. xxv. 29, xxxvii. 16; Num. iv. 7). Now, we do not know anything as to the content of the table, other than that it had the loaves, and yet connected with the table there were vessels of gold for pouring out.

That by the way, as to the number of vessels, the variety of vessels; but the specific use of every vessel is something impressive in the tabernacle, and every vessel was anointed with the blood and with the oil. That would be worth looking into in detail, but we shall not do so now. We shall simply take the spiritual implication of the fact that in the Lord’s house, and for its service, its ministry, there are very many vessels. They have as many uses as there are vessels—a variety of uses. Every one of them has its own particular function, and all the vessels, no matter how small and insignificant, and

however inferior might seem their function, even to the very snuffers for getting rid of the unpleasant elements of smoke and burnt-out wick, they all come under the anointing. Now, there are the corresponding ministries in the spiritual House of God, but I am not going to speak about them at this time. I am simply pointing out that there are these many vessels, and every one to serve a purpose, and no matter how small their measure and menial their purpose, the same anointing belongs to the small as to the great. They all share the one anointing to fulfil their purpose.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD IN THE CHOICE OF THE VESSEL

The first thing I want to point out in that connection is the sovereignty of God in the choosing and the appointing of every vessel. This was true of the smallest vessel of the tabernacle. As with the whole tabernacle, the smallest vessel of ministry was according to the pattern in the heavenlies. It was a part of the comprehensive pattern, and the whole pattern came down to it. The Lord never left any place for man to make it out of his own mind, not even the smallest thing to serve Him in the tabernacle. The Lord did not say, ‘Now, it is most important that the tabernacle at large, the great framework and these major things, should be exactly as I have prescribed; but as to all the little things that will have to be brought in and will be necessary and useful—well, I leave that to you’. He never did anything like that. Every part, every little vessel of ministry, took its character from the whole heavenly pattern, and was governed by the sovereign thought of God. God sovereignly kept in His own hands the design of the smallest part, both as to its nature and as to its function.

The sovereignty of God as to our place as a vessel of ministry is something that calls for a real attitude and exercise of faith. We are all the vessels of ministry. The sovereignty of God has chosen us in Christ. I expect we are all prepared to agree that Saul of Tarsus was a chosen vessel. As the Lord said to Ananias: "he is a chosen vessel unto me" (Acts ix. 15). We will all agree that that was so, as regards Saul, and that it was a Divine sovereign act that secured that vessel from all eternity. But the same sovereignty, the same eternal purpose, governs every smaller vessel. Paul, of whom it was said that he was a chosen vessel, will later on write: "he chose us in him"; not 'he chose me particularly', but "he chose us in him before the foundation of the world" (Eph. i. 4).

Do remember that this matter of election and predestination is related to function, to purpose—not to salvation. It is related to purpose. God has chosen us in His sovereignty, and has chosen us to serve as a part of the whole.

We must set aside the whole idea of typology, just write it off as very nice, very interesting, all right as illustration for the kindergarten, but nothing more than a set of pretty pictures for children, if we are not going to say that the tabernacle, from centre to circumference, from the whole framework to the last small vessel of ministry, represents Christ. It is the one all-inclusive Christ, and in every fragment Christ is to be found. If that is not true, then our interpretation is just playing at things; but if it is true, then every small part is a part of Christ, and is chosen in Him for *the* comprehensive purpose of Christ—God's purpose concerning His Son.

There is one thing that we shall have to settle sooner or later, if we are not going to be as it were suspended between heaven and earth in indefiniteness and uncertainty, missing the mark and being misfits, and, as we say, cutting no ice. In Christ, by the grace of God, I am a vessel of mercy, and there relates to me, in the sovereignty of God, by my being chosen and called, a function, a ministry, an aspect of the purpose of God concerning His Son. It is in the sovereignty of God that I am now in Christ. So far as the initiative was concerned, it was not my doing to get into Christ. I should never have got into Christ by my own initiative; I should never have been brought to the Lord by my own choice. 'We did not choose Him but He chose us': that is perfectly true—the initiative was with the Lord. So we have got to settle down on this fact that we are in Christ, and not by our own choice or initiative, much as we may have longed for it. We would not have done it if God had not done it; sovereign

grace has done it. We are in Christ, and therefore we are a part of Christ, and whether it be a spoon or a cup or any one of the numerous vessels, there is a specific function for which I am called in Christ, a ministry of the tabernacle which is my ministry.

You see, the thing which governs this is the numerous ministries. What a variety of ministries! I do not know if it would be true to say that there were not two vessels exactly alike in the tabernacle, but I do know that there were very many vessels and a great variety of uses, and every one was needed. In the same way, if we were missing, something would be lost in the whole tabernacle, there would be a weakness in the whole heavenly system, and that comes down to you and to me.

Now, that is the beginning of service, where we in faith apprehend that. I am in Christ: therefore that means that I have been chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. I am an elect vessel. I may not seem as important as some, but that depends entirely upon the standpoint from which you view importance. Are you viewing importance from the standpoint of size, or are you viewing importance from the standpoint of indispensability? A pin may be as indispensable as the garment which it holds up! It depends entirely upon the particular standpoint from which you are viewing importance. These little things on the tabernacle and on the altar and lying by the lampstand—they were indispensable, and it was that that gave them their importance. Do you think that God ever chose us in Christ out of His sovereignty if He had no need, that He just did it for the sake of doing it, without any real meaning or purpose of importance? Not at all! God is not like that. You look into Nature and you see importance attached to very small things, and if those small things fail, a whole big system may break down. I would like to follow that out and illustrate it, but the statement will be enough.

First of all, then, the sovereignty of God governs our being in Christ: and that sovereignty means that there is a purpose for our being in Christ, and that that purpose is attached to every one of us, and it may be an aspect of the purpose which is our peculiar vocation or function in the sovereignty of God. Would you adjust yourself to that first of all? Come away from the general to the particular, in your view of life and of yourself; come away from the indefinite; come right away from that questioning, doubting, wondering whether there is anything at all that relates to you, whether you have a place. It is faith that has to take a very deliberate attitude and step in relation to this.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD IN THE
MAKING OF THE VESSEL

Then the second thing is that the sovereignty of God is connected with the making of the vessel; not only with the choosing of its existence and of its function, but with its making. Do you not feel sometimes that perhaps our God is too small, too little—the God that we think of? The God that we have made according to our mind is far too small. To Jeremiah, the Lord said: “Before I formed thee . . . I knew thee, and before thou camest forth . . . I sanctified thee” (Jeremiah i. 5). ‘I formed you; before you had a physical being, I had known you and formed you and called you’. And Jeremiah responded, “I cannot speak: for I am a child”. If the Lord meant anything at all by telling Jeremiah that He formed him and chose him before he had a being, He must have meant: ‘Well, you are just as I made you; I made you to serve a purpose like that. If I had wanted to make you differently, I could have done so. You think you would have been more suitable if you had been made differently; you think you would be able to do very much better if only you were made differently. You think I have made a mistake in the way you are made. All the time you are saying, “I am not made that way, I am not made for this, I am not made for that”; and you are really saying, “The Lord has made a mistake in choosing me”; or else, “I have got into the wrong place, I am not made for this”’. It is a thing about which most of us in our lives have had a bad time. Many a servant of God, finding himself or herself in a very onerous situation, a very responsible position, has cried out, ‘Oh, if only I had been made for this!’—under a deep sense of being unfitted, unqualified for the work and the position. The thing is beyond us. Are we going to close down on that and say that is so? ‘The Lord did not know anything about us when He called us; and the Lord never had any hand either in our being made or in our call. If the Lord had known about us, if He had really known what sort of people we are, He would not have chosen us for this’. That is the world in which we live and reason and argue.

The Lord said to Moses: “I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry . . . ; and I am come down to deliver them . . . Come now . . . , and I will send thee . . .” (Ex. iii. 7, 8, 10). Moses said, ‘I cannot speak! You have chosen the wrong one; You need somebody who has a faculty that I have not got—You really need a different kind of man!’ (Ex. iv. 10, 13). The Lord said: “Who hath made

man’s mouth?” (vs. 11). ‘Did I make your mouth? If I did, I made it as it is.’ It was the same issue as with Jeremiah. “I have . . . set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, and to destroy and to overthrow; to build, and to plant” (Jer. i. 10). “I cannot speak”. Did the Lord say, ‘I am sorry, Jeremiah, I have made a mistake—I have got the wrong man!’? No! The Lord touched Jeremiah’s mouth and said: “I have put my words in thy mouth” (vs. 9). “To whomsoever I shall send thee thou shalt go”.

What does this mean?

It means that there is a sovereignty behind even the way we are made, when God gets hold of us, and He is going to be glorified, not in efficient, able vessels that could say, ‘Well, you see, I am thoroughly well qualified for the job that I am in’. If there is anything like that, we shall have to come to another recognition about vessels, which we will see presently. **But for the moment** let us keep to this: there is a sovereignty in the choice of us, and God knows all about how we are made. He knows all about the disadvantages, the handicaps, the limitations; He knows what lies in the background. He knows all about it, and exactly how we are made; and, knowing all about it, He has chosen us. God did not choose us after we were made. He chose us before. He went back behind everything—and God is further behind things than we realise—behind our lives, behind what we call the misfortunes, what we call the handicaps; He is behind them all. Do you believe that? It is very difficult to believe sometimes. You are so overwhelmed with the sense of your limitations, your lack of qualification.

Is it not just here that we are not only vessels of mercy, but vessels of glory? What is the vessel for?—to show forth its own excellencies, or ‘the excellencies of Him who called us’? (I Pet. ii. 9). The excellencies of the Lord can only be seen when they are not overshadowed by any human excellencies; when it is just frail vessels, poor vessels—and His glory. It is only another way of expressing what Paul said to the Corinthians: “Ye behold your calling, brethren”. ‘Have a look at the calling, the selection, that is represented by the Church in Corinth; have a look at the personnel of the Church in Corinth; see what calling means where the personnel is concerned’. “Not many wise . . . , not many mighty, not many noble, . . . but God chose the foolish things . . . the weak things . . . the base things . . . the things that are despised . . . the things that are not, that he might bring to nought the things that are” (I Cor. i. 26–28). Sovereignty lies behind what we are in ourselves, to make us then what He wants us to be.

THE LORD'S SOVEREIGNTY IN DEALING WITH THE VESSEL

The sovereignty that constitutes us for His service, firstly naturally and then spiritually, will then work out in this particular way that the Lord is taking, which, according to His sovereign wisdom and sovereign judgment, is the way most suited to—perhaps the only way to—the end that He has in view. You have to believe that. Why does the Lord deal with me thus? Why do I have this peculiar experience and history, so different from many? Why do I go this way? Why is the Lord dealing with *me* like this? Every one of us has a personal history with God, and usually in our personal history with God there is plenty of room for a 'Why?' In His sovereignty, He is taking the way with you and with me which His wisdom has decided is the way of reaching His end where we are concerned. He could not do that with others. He has to do it in the way that He considers suitable to each case. Every vessel has to be shaped as though it were the only one for that particular purpose. God does not work on the mass-production basis with His servants. Every one is a special separate object, and He deals with that one in a peculiar way. There is something about that one's history which is, to the one who is concerned, their own lonely life with God; that is, there is much that no one can share or understand. God has, as it were, singled them out as individuals. That is His sovereign dealing with us. Do you believe that? We have to take an attitude of faith on all these matters, or we shall simply go round in a circle, we shall be suspended, held up, get nowhere, we shall have no particular impact.

THE LORD'S NEED FOR OUR CO-OPERATION

I close with two other things which are bound up with what I have said. One is that, in His formation of us according to His own thought and intention, the Lord counts upon our co-operation. To use the well-known figure of Jeremiah xviii, He may come up against something in the clay which resists His hand, which stands out against the way that He is taking, which is a 'No' to Him, which is a reservation, a lack of compliance, and just at that point the whole glorious purpose may come under arrest. It is just at that point that we may be rendered a misfit, perhaps for the rest of our lives. The Divine intentions of grace may be defeated, it may be at that point that the history of a circle begins. We take a long tour round, and come back to the same place, and find that, after

all, we have made no progress: a lot of time has been lost, a lot of value has been forfeited, and we are just back where we were before; we have not got past that. That has to be cleared up, of however long standing it may be—maybe months, maybe years—but not until it is cleared up, not until there is a yielding, a response to the Lord there on that point, do we take up the straight road again.

THE LORD'S EMPTYING AND FILLING OF THE VESSEL

The other thing is this—that God retains the right to fill and use the vessel, and therefore, as a part of His sovereignty, He must empty it of everything but Himself. Paul said: "Most gladly therefore will I . . . glory in my weakness, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (II Cor. xii. 9). That is an emptied vessel, a vessel emptied of its own strength, its own wisdom, its own will, its own way; emptied because God reserves the right to occupy the vessel to the full; He will not co-occupy with anything of man. The emptying may explain much. If we have any fulness of ourselves, fulness of any kind that is ours, then we shall not come to the purpose of God until it is all got rid of, and we are emptied out, for it is emptied vessels that God fills. It has always been so.

Here are some tremendous propositions! However challenging they are to faith—and they are challenging—take these steps one by one.

Firstly, am I chosen of God, or is this all my doing? Am I a Christian, am I saved, am I in Christ, because I have done it all, or has the Lord done this? And, if I have been on the way for some time, have I had sufficient experience to know that, if I had done it, I would have been out long ago? It was the Lord who did it, and the Lord who has held me. There is every evidence that the Lord is in this matter, with initiative and sovereignty. I belong to Him; and what does that imply? It implies a sovereignty of God in my choice, in my election, in my being—chosen in God.

Secondly, why am I chosen in Christ? Just to be there and just to be saved? Does election and predestination relate to my being saved? Can I accept that—which must carry with it the implication that all are not elected to be saved, and God is arbitrary? Oh no, I cannot believe that! No; election relates to purpose. Then am I elect according to the purpose?

Further, is not that purpose many-sided? Does not the whole Word, Old and New Testaments, show that there is a many-sidedness to the purpose

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

that is centred in Christ? I must, then, have some place in it, which is my place; and, if that is true, does God know all about it, all about me—has He chosen me because I am so suited and fitted and qualified for it? No! I very soon get disillusioned about that if I have any such ideas. The last thing for which I am qualified is the thing for which God has called me. He has to do all the qualifying.

So then, taking it stage by stage, let us get right to the Lord about it—let us settle this matter, and come to rest; it may be with a larger apprehension of the Lord, having a bigger Lord. He cannot be bigger than He is, but He can be bigger than we

make Him, Oh, for a bigger God and Lord! That is our need. If we do get this far greater, more comprehensive faith in the Lord, we shall be saved from so much that now brings us into arrest, and puts us out, because of this and that and something else—all implying that the Lord does not understand, the Lord never took this into account, the Lord must have made a mistake. It is not so; the Lord knows all about it.

May the Lord make His word of some help and value, and enable us to take quite a definite attitude, for much may be hanging upon the attitude that we take, and upon our response to the Lord, in this matter.

T. A-S.

A GREAT WARFARE

STUDIES IN BUNYAN'S "HOLY WAR" II

WE have already seen something of the issues that are at stake in this "great warfare", and we must now return to these for a moment by way of reminder. In the heat of the battle of every-day life, we ever tend to forget the background of this war. What a help it is to realise that no detail of our lives is without meaning. Every day and every situation provide an opportunity for the vindicating of the Father's honour. The questions as to the absolute worthiness of God and His complete trustworthiness are ever present. Daily we face the issue as to whether we will worship God *alone* or whether other gods shall have a place too. How often we find the Lord's interests and our own in conflict! How often we discover that the Lord's thoughts and ways are not ours! But what do we do then? *Do we worship?* Do we vindicate the worthiness of God? And when everything shouts at us, as at Job long ago, that God has let us down, do we vindicate His trustworthiness—*do we still worship?* The vindicating of God is one of the great issues in this war, and it is an issue with us every day of our lives.

Then again, we ever need to have it before us that heaven is making war for the recovery of the Son's inheritance in MAN, "his inheritance in the saints". The Church *belongs* to the Son. Making this very personal, *we belong* to Christ. "Ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price" is Paul's word (I Cor. vi. 19, 20). How the usurper loves to occupy Christ's place! He will do anything to have even a foothold in Mansoul.

Another great issue, closely connected with those above, is the fulfilling of a purpose concerning MAN. MAN is a wonderful creation! MAN is God's

masterpiece! Bunyan rightly speaks of 'The *Famous Town of Mansoul*'. Mansoul is the "Top-piece", and when the whole story is told, it will be seen that the malice of the enemy and the tragic fall of the town have only provided the Lord with His greatest opportunity to glorify His Name. Such is the Grace and Power of God! Who can comprehend the transcendent glory of God's new creation in Christ? Bunyan puts it this way:

"As Mansoul should in time be suffered to be lost, so as certainly it should be recovered again; recovered, I say, *in such a way, as that both the King and his Son would get themselves eternal fame and glory thereby*";

and, again, he discloses Emmanuel's purpose toward the Town to be—

"to put Mansoul, through the power of his matchless love, into a *far better and more happy condition* than 'twas in before it was taken by Diabolus."

Having reminded ourselves of these great issues which lie in the background of the controversy over Mansoul, we now turn to consider some features of the campaign. In the first place, let us weigh up—

THE STRENGTH OF THE ENEMY

In a war, it is of the greatest importance to have intelligence as to the strength of the opposing army. Each side jealously guards the secrets of its strength (and weakness) and each commander strives to discover the battle plan of his enemy. Battles are often won by the side having *the super-*

ior intelligence. The whole war may depend upon this matter of *intelligence*. How true this is in spiritual warfare! Our enemy is a strategist. He has a plan of campaign. He knows where we are vulnerable. He knows he has many willing allies in the human heart. The Lord would have us alive to the devices, the stratagems of our cunning foe. Not that we are to become occupied with him; our eyes are to be fixed upon our Captain. But we need to be alert and intelligent in fellowship with Him, "the only wise God" (Rom. xvi. 27).

With Bunyan's help, then, let us spy out some of the secrets of the enemy's strength, and seek to discover that upon which he relies for victory.

(1) MANSOUL'S NEW AND TERRIBLE CONSTITUTION

When Diabolus captured Mansoul, through subtlety, he immediately set about "new modelling the Town"; that is, he gave it a new constitution, according to his own mind and nature. Mansoul had been given a constitution by Shaddai, and the image of Shaddai was in the Town. Now everything was changed by Diabolus, in order that Mansoul might be the fit expression of his own fallen nature. This is the terrible truth about man's fallen state: Man is involved in a terrible alliance with Satan, "a horrible communion".

First, Diabolus turned his attention to the Elders of the Town, the governing body in Mansoul, the Lord *Mayor*, whose name was my Lord *Understanding*, Mr. *Recorder*, whose name was Mr. *Conscience*, and my Lord *Willbewill*.

Now Diabolus was afraid of my Lord *Understanding*, "because he was a seeing man. Wherefore he darkened it [i. e. his understanding], not only by taking from him his office and power, but by building a high and strong Tower, just between the Sun's reflections and the Windows of my Lord's Palace; by which means his house and all, and the whole of his habitation, was made as dark as darkness itself. And thus being alienated from the light, he became as one that was born blind. To this his house, my Lord was confined as to a Prison. So then, so long as Mansoul was under the power and government of Diabolus, so long my Lord *Mayor* was rather an impediment in, than an advantage to the famous Town of Mansoul."

The new Lord *Mayor*, appointed by Diabolus in the stead of my Lord *Understanding*, was the Lord *Lustings*, a man that had neither *Eyes* nor *Ears*.

What a disclosure of the condition of man by nature, and of the enemy's strength in man! Man has no *understanding*; he is in the dark; he neither understands his true state nor the truth about the

Lord. *Captain Blindfold* stands sentinel at Eye-Gate. Lord *Lustings* has taken over, "the *lusts* of our flesh . . . the *desires* of the flesh and of the mind" (Eph. ii. 3). How pitifully true it is that man is no longer the understanding, sane being he was created; he is no longer "in his right mind", he is out of his senses, driven by lusts and ambitions, without *Eyes* to see where he is going, or *Ears* to hear the voice of the Lord. This is not just Bunyan's imagination, but the view of *heaven*.

" . . . without understanding . . ." (Rom. i. 31).

" . . . being darkened in their understanding . . ." (Eph. iv. 18).

No wonder Paul prayed for the saints at Colossae that they might "be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and *understanding* . . ." (Col. i. 9). We, as the Lord's true children, are still without understanding *by nature*, that is *in ourselves*. *We have an understanding in Christ, and as we abide in Him—but only in Him* (I John v. 20).

Next, Diabolus did his utmost to put Mr. *Recorder*, that is Mr. *Conscience*, out of action.

"He was a man well read in the Laws of his King, and also a man of courage and faithfulness to speak truth at every occasion. And he had a tongue as bravely hung, as he had a head filled with judgment. Now, this man Diabolus could by no means abide . . ."

Paul discloses (Rom. ii. 14, 15) that the ministry of *Conscience* is closely related to the *Law*. Mr. *Conscience* administers the *Law*. Someone has well said that 'Conscience is the moral memory of man.' Conscience is always reminding us of the righteous requirement of the *Law*.

"Diabolus, therefore, feared the Recorder more than any that was left alive in the Town of Mansoul, because, as I said, his words did shake the whole Town."

Diabolus, therefore, did all he could to debauch the old Gentleman, to stupefy his mind and to harden his heart in the ways of vanity. Moreover, he sought to persuade the men of the town that Mr. *Recorder* was mad, and to slight, neglect and despise him. But he could not make him wholly his, and *when the power of heaven* was presently brought to bear upon the town, both Mr. *Conscience* and my Lord *Understanding* gave Diabolus and the town under his spell many a sleepless night.

In the place of Mr. *Conscience*, Diabolus set up one, *Forget-Good*, the *spirit of forgetfulness* in regard to the Lord and the things of heaven. How true this is of man! "*Remember*" is a great word in Scripture.

While Diabolus darkened the *understanding* and corrupted the *conscience*, he took man's *will* into his service.

"My Lord Willbewill was as high born as any man in Mansoul, and was as much, if not more, a freeholder than many of them were; besides, if I remember my tale aright, he had some privilege peculiar to himself in the famous Town of Mansoul. He was a man of great strength, resolution, and courage. He scorned now to be a slave in Mansoul; and therefore resolved to bear office under Diabolus. The tyrant, therefore, made him the Captain of the *Castle*, Governor of the *Wall*, and Keeper of the *Gates* of Mansoul. So that now, next to Diabolus himself, who but my Lord Willbewill in all the Town of Mansoul! He had also, one, Mr. *Mind* for his Clerk, a man to speak on every way like his Master, and a Deputy under him, and his name was Mr. *Affection*, one that was also greatly debauched in his principles, and answerable thereto in his life."

What a problem is the enslaved human will! The Lord Willbewill was a great doer for Diabolus. As far as *man's being* is concerned the war turns upon *the will*. Oh, the strength of the enemy entrenched within the will of fallen man!

"... ye *will* not..." (John v. 40).

"... ye *would* not!" (Matt. xxiii. 37).

Thus it was that Diabolus proceeded with his terrible work. The image of Shaddai was defaced, and his own horrible image set up. The Laws of Shaddai were destroyed, and his own vain Statutes made law. At every point, Mansoul was debased and constituted the enemy of its true King. Well might Diabolus now think himself safe, *but the Cross is in the field!*

(II) THE WEAPON OF DECEPTION

The Devil is a liar. He is a master of deception. He knows how to disguise himself and how to hide his real intentions. Again and again in the course of the War we find the weapon of deceit being employed. Diabolus gained the Town in the first place by deceiving it, by making insinuations as to the character and purpose of Shaddai. He held the Town by the same means. Later he sought to regain the Town by "*sugaring* his lips, and *seeming* to be a very sweet-mouthed Prince."

The terrible thing about being deceived is that we do not find out *until afterwards*, until it is too late. How often people and things are not what they seem to be! The Gibeonites are always appearing and taking us in! (Josh. ix). And how the enemy loves to conjure up within us a host of imaginations, questions, reactions, doubts and

feelings! The human soul, with all its variableness, provides him with just the ground he needs. The *disguised* Diabolonians were found in the Market Place, the realm of man's conscious life. There is no defence against "the deceiving one" except a very close and humble walk with the Lord. *The truth* is a wonderfully emancipating thing! The Lord Jesus said: "If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and *the truth shall make you free*" (John viii. 31, 32).

"We know him that is *true*, and we are in him that is *true*, even in his Son Jesus Christ" (I John v. 20).

(HI) OLD MR. PREJUDICE, THE KEEPER OF EAR-GATE

Old Mr. Prejudice was one of Lord Willbewill's Officers and was by him given command of Ear-Gate, "the gate in at which the King's forces sought most to enter." He had under his command sixty *Deaf men!* Oh, the enemy knows the value of spiritual deafness due to prejudice! How tragically true it is that people *cannot* hear the Lord because they have made up their minds already. Old Mr. Prejudice has always been one of the enemy's most valuable and trusted allies. It was prejudice, as much as anything else, that was the ruin of the leaders of Israel when the Lord Jesus was here, and that led to the Cross. It is prejudice that is crippling many of the Lord's children to-day. We all tend to pre-judge people and situations, to make up our minds finally without knowing all the facts, to have our convictions which we will never abandon. Oh, the tragedies that have resulted from deeply-held convictions! The history of the Church is strewn with them. The Lord deliver us from old Mr. Prejudice and make us *teachable*, adjustable people, willing, if need be, to abandon *our* most cherished convictions, in pursuit of the truth.

(IV) ILL-PAUSE, DIABOLUS' ORATOR AND THE ANCIENT ENEMY OF MANSOUL

Whenever Diabolus had a difficult matter on hand, he took *old Ill-Pause* with him, that is, *the spirit of hesitation, the spirit of procrastination*. Both in the gaining of the Town and in the retaining of the Town Ill-Pause rendered Diabolus invaluable service. The enemy knows the value of *gaining time* when he is in difficulties. He knows that if only he can get us to parley with him, if only he can persuade us to put off till to-morrow that whole-hearted response to the Lord which He is looking for *to-day*, that adjustment to or faith

in the Lord which is needed *to-day*, then almost certainly he will have won the day.

Is it not for this reason that the Lord is so *practical* in His dealings with us? He is not interested in what we *know* but in what we *are*. The letters to the Ephesians and the Colossians begin in 'the heavenlies' and end in the home! The Lord knows how easy it is to be hearers of the Word and not doers, and we shall never be doers of the word if we listen to III-Pause.

(V) MR. PUFF-UP, DIABOLUS' FOUNDER, AND MR. LOTH-TO-STOOP, A GREAT 'DOER' FOR DIABOLUS

Here we find in the service of Diabolus, *the spirit of pride*, together with *the unbending spirit*. It was *Puff-up* who cast in the castle the two great guns, *High-Mind* and *Heady*, which were planted upon the Tower over Ear-gate, "and mischievous pieces they were." It was *Mr. Loth-to-Stoop* that Diabolus sent to Emmanuel in the hope of coming to terms with Him and retaining at least a corner in Mansoul for himself.

The strength of Satan himself lurks within human pride and self-exaltation. All our unyieldedness to the Lord is but the expression of the nature of one who has defied God. But Satan knows that while the pride of man is his strength, the meekness of man is his undoing. It was the meekness, the mighty submissiveness of Christ that cast out Satan. Here are great principles of far-reaching significance. *The devil encamps upon our pride and unyieldedness, but is overthrown by a meek and submissive spirit.*

(VI) CAPTAIN ANYTHING,
 A GREAT 'DOER' IN THE TOWN

The trouble with Captain Anything was that he could not *concentrate*, neither would he *commit himself* to either side. For all that he was ever on the side of Diabolus and a great favourite with him. Our God is the God of purpose, of concentration, the God who is doing *one thing*. There is nothing indefinite in Him. But the enemy is *the spirit of dissipation*: he loves to scatter, to disintegrate, to have us busy about many things, about anything. He fears *the united heart*; he fears a *united people*. "Divide, Scatter, Disintegrate" are his watchwords. *This* is of the evil one. How this race is marked by dissipation, by a preoccupation with a thousand things that do not matter. How we need a *spirit of concentration* upon the Lord, upon His interests, upon the things which are eternal. Paul had met Captain Anything; that is why he wrote:—

"... *one thing* I do ..." (Phil. iii. 13).

(VII) OLD INCREDULITY, UNIVERSAL DEPUTY AND GENERALISSIMO UNDER DIABOLUS

Old Incredulity is second to none among all the forces marshalled under Diabolus. He was one of the usurper's Lord Mayors. By his faithfulness (!) to Diabolus he earned the position of his Universal Deputy. Emmanuel's captains list Diabolus, *Incredulity* and *Willbewill* as the great Doers against them. This "old fox" was the only ally of Diabolus to break prison and make his escape before being executed, after Emmanuel's taking of the town. We find him finally at the head of the whole army of the Pit. *Such* is the enemy's confidence in *the spirit of unbelief*! As we find Captain Credence, *the spirit of faith*, as Emmanuel's Lord Lieutenant over all the forces in Mansoul, so we find Old Incredulity leading out the powers of darkness. How suggestive is this! How revealing as to where the enemy's strength lies, and how helpful to know the Lord's answer to the power of His enemy, an answer of victory.

"This is the victory . . . even our faith" (I John v. 4).

"And what shall I more say? for the time will fall me if I tell of"—*Mr. Carnal-Security*, who brought the Town into grievous bondage; of *Mr. No-Truth*, who was entrusted with the work of defacing the image of Shaddai; of *Mr. False-Peace*, a great man, and son of *Mr. Flatter* and *Mrs. Soothe-up*; of the *Lord Covetousness*, who disguised himself as one *Prudent-Thrifty*; of old *Evil-Questioning*, who preferred to go by the name of *Honest-Inquiry*, and his children, *Doubt* (the eldest), *Legal-Life*, *Wrong-Thoughts-of-Christ*, *Clip-Promise* (abuser of the King's Coin), *Carnal-Sense* the elusive, *Live-by-Feeling*, and *Self-Love* (who was brained by Captain Self-Denial); of the terrible *Captain Sepulchre*; of the drumming of *Diabolus' Drummer*; and of the great *Army of Doubters* which sought to engulf the Town.

To a further consideration of some of these we may later return, but enough has been said to indicate some of the secrets of the enemy's strength. Let us, in closing, set over against the power of the enemy—

THE GREATER STRENGTH OF THE LORD

"*The Lord is a man of war*" (Ex. xv. 3).

If we have given close and detailed consideration of the power of the enemy, it does after all only serve to magnify the transcendent POWER OF GOD, for when the Devil has done his worst—and what a terrible worst it is—the final victory is with the Lord! Oh, the Wisdom, the Power and the

Grace of God which are expressed in the face of such opposition! How the Lord delights to turn the darkest night into the brightest day!

While any detailed consideration must wait, let us see a little now of the Lord in action as a Man of War.

The Lord has foreseen everything and provided for every eventuality before the war for Mansoul has even begun! The victory is won before the war has begun. The triumph of the Cross is an eternal fact, which the enemy is seeking in vain to circumvent. "Mansoul is won!" is the battle-cry—before Mansoul is in fact won! See Diabolus crouch and cringe before Emmanuel. He *knows* it is only a question of time, he *knows* he has lost the battle, and yet he will fight it out to the bitter end. See the mighty armies of heaven, under Emmanuel and His Captains, on the move with the great battering rams and golden slings. Watch the breaking open of Ear-Gate, in spite of Old Prejudice and his Deaf Men. See the power of the enemy disintegrate until Diabolus is made a spectacle and cast out, and then see the wisdom and grace of

Emmanuel win the Town to His allegiance. It is one thing to make us *bow the knee*, it is quite another to *win our hearts*. It is GRACE that wins our hearts always, and the Lord will be satisfied with nothing less.

See again the wonderful transformation of Mansoul through the presence of Emmanuel and His Captains. Heaven has come in, the old constitution set up by Diabolus is swept away, and a heavenly constitution takes its place.

And when the folly of the Town gives the enemy another opportunity of expressing his power, the sovereign grace of Emmanuel only finds new ways of bringing good out of evil and glory out of shame. Well do we worship Him, who is "greater than all"; greater than all that we are, greater than all our sin and limitations, and greater than the enemy at his worst. The Lord make us alive to the secret strength of the enemy, both in our lives and in the wider realm of his interest in this world, but above all give us a deeper, ever deeper, appreciation of His transcendent greatness and worthiness.

T. L. M.

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

NAME OR NATURE

JACK, Jill and the twins came in just as their mother was filling some bowls with hyacinth bulbs. Jack, as usual, was full of questions as to how things were done and why. Jill, being the oldest, had seen bulbs planted before and thought that she knew all about it. The twins were still quite small and didn't say much, but they were glad to know that the flowers would be blue, and would have a nice scent—that is, if the bulbs came up.

When the children were alone Jill had a bright idea. Let them all plant hyacinths too, and give mother a surprise. They all agreed and went off to the potting shed to see what they could find, and sure enough, there on the bench were two lovely shiny bulbs, just waiting to be put in. Jill took up one of them, and Jack took the other; then they began to look around to see where the bulbs could be planted. Up in her room Jill had a pretty little bowl which had held bulbs the year before; she ran up to fetch it, and began to fill it with the rest of the bulb fibre which her mother had not used. By this time Jack had thought of another question. "Are you sure that these are real hyacinths?" he asked. "Suppose they are something else?" Jill said that she was quite sure—they must be. As she buried her bulb in the fibre and looked again at

the pretty pot, she could not bear to think that the flower would not be as fine as last year's. Looking around again, she saw on the ground one of those labels with a bright picture of the flower and the words "Blue Hyacinth". She picked up the label and fixed it on the bowl. Fancy Jack asking such a silly question! It must be all right in such a pot and with the right label on.

Yet Jack still did not feel quite sure. He so wanted to get a good flower—a better one than Jill's if he could. He had no bowl in his room, and in any case Jill had used up all the rest of the fibre. He thought and thought, and then at last he had an idea—a really good one. He pulled out one of his mother's bowls which she had left in a dark corner, a big bowl which had several bulbs planted in a circle, and then he buried his bulb right in the centre, in between the others. Now he felt happy. Planted in among the other bulbs and growing up with them, his would surely have a fine flower. And as he pushed the bowl back into its corner, he gave a chuckle, for he had gone one better than Jill. She would have to keep watering hers, but he needn't bother, for mother would water his without knowing that it was there. What a surprise when she saw the hyacinth growing in among hers!

What had the twins been doing all this time? Well, they always tried to imitate Jill and Jack, so they had wanted to plant a bulb also. Just to keep them quiet Jack gave them an old dried-up looking thing which was lying on a shelf. Neither he nor Jill wanted it; in fact it was so dry and knobby that not for a moment did he think that it would ever grow. He gave them an old broken flower pot as well, and then left them to get on as best they could. By the time that Jack and Jill had finished, the twins had put some earth in the cracked flower pot and were trying to get their ugly old bulb down into the earth. Jill gave them a hand in pushing it well down, and showed them how to water it. She was glad to keep them happy, but felt sure that they would never have a flower. She and Jack would, of course, for their bulbs were smooth and fresh looking.

The weeks went past, and green shoots began to show in all the bowls. Jack saw the leaves of his bulb growing up among the others. Jill's pretty bowl had nice green leaves showing in it too, so that she longed for the day when she would be able to get rid of the label, and instead to have a real flower, as blue as the one in the picture, and, what is more, sweetly scented. Even the twins' old bulb began to sprout. Sometimes they forgot to water it, and sometimes they watered it too much, but still it kept alive and grew. It was all very exciting!

Then one day mother saw the extra plant in her bowl, and what is more she knew that it was not only extra but different. She began to ask questions this time, and soon the whole secret was out. Poor Jack and Jill!! Their surprise turned out to be greater than they had expected; but instead of being a happy one it was just the opposite. Mother laughed so much that she could hardly get breath to tell them what was the matter. Instead of bulbs they had planted *onions*! Fancy expecting to get hyacinths from onions!

It was clear to Jill that you can't change an onion by planting it in a hyacinth bowl, not even with the proper label. It was no use just calling it a hyacinth or hoping that the pot would help it to be one. If the bulb has not got a hyacinth nature it

will never give the scented bell-flowers of a hyacinth. Yet there are boys and girls, yes, and grown-ups too, who think that they can be Christians just by taking the name, by living in a Christian home, going to Sunday services or belonging to a church. Neither the howl nor the label could change Jill's onion into a hyacinth. An onion is an onion, wherever it grows. And a sinner is still a sinner, even if he tries his best to act like a Christian.

Jack's onion was no better than Jill's, even if it did grow up in the midst of hyacinths. It did not take on any of their scent, and it could not copy their blue colour. Even if the onion had been planted among hyacinths year after year, there would have been no gradual change. It would never have become less and less of an onion, and more and more of a hyacinth, for it had its own nature which would never alter. Nor can we ever be changed by just mixing with Christians or trying to copy their ways.

Now we come to the strangest part of the story. That ugly old bulb which Jack gave to the twins was really a great success. It had looked dead and they hadn't cared for it very well, but it had life in it, and from this life came a lovely flower. There in its old cracked pot, it stood up strong and beautiful, filling the air around with its sweet scent. It was a hyacinth bulb after all, with a hyacinth heart. The twins, of course, were very proud of what they had done, but it wasn't so much due to them as to the nature of the bulb having a chance to show itself. The two onions were *called* hyacinths by *name*, but the twins' bulb *was* a hyacinth by *nature*. And it is the nature which matters rather than the name.

That is why the Lord Jesus said that we must be born again. He meant that a Christian is one who has Christ's nature in his heart, which is more than a name, and more than trying to be good and follow Jesus. It means that "It is no longer I, but Christ that lives in me" (Galatians 2. 20). An onion can never become a hyacinth, but a sinner may be made into a child of God, if he will let Christ come into his heart. It is then that the beauty of Jesus will be seen in him, for he has not only Christ's Name but also His nature.

H. F.

GOD'S GOOD PLEASURE

"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke xii. 32).

IT is upon a part of that statement that I want to dwell: "*it is your Father's good pleasure*". There is a very great, a vast, opening out of that fragment in the later part of the New Testament—later, that is, so far as our arrangement is concerned, not later actually in date, for the Gospels were written much about the same time as many of the epistles. But when we turn to such fuller revelation as we have in Paul's letter to the Ephesians we have this: "*having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will*" (Eph. i. 5). "Your Father's good pleasure"; "the good pleasure of his will". And then again: "*making known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in him unto a dispensation of the fulness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ*" (Eph. i. 9, 10). And again, in Philippians ii. 13, we have this: "*It is God which worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure*". The good pleasure of the Lord is a tremendous thing. "To give you the kingdom"; "foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will"; "making known unto us the mystery of his will" (how great a thing that is!) "according to his good pleasure"; and He is 'working in us to will and to work according to His good pleasure'.

And yet it is not the object that is with me for this moment. It is the *fact* of His good pleasure. We have recently passed through a season of the year in which the old Authorised translation of Luke ii. 14 has been very much used: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men". There are different views as to how the original ought to be translated here; the renderings are various. "Men in whom he is well pleased", or His "goodwill toward men". I do not think it matters very much, because the upshot of it all, and the very accompaniments and associations of that great event, all combine to speak of His goodwill. And, after all, was not that the beginning of the Gospel?—and the Gospel is "good news". It is the spirit, the attitude, the mind of God toward us that is the thing of importance—His goodwill.

THE BATTLE TO MAINTAIN FAITH
IN GOD'S GOODWILL

I am not going to speak of the associations of that goodwill, that good pleasure, as we have them in the passages which we have read. Each one of them relates the goodwill of God to some tremendous thing. But you and I need constantly to be held strongly to this fact, that God's attitude toward us is a 'goodwill' attitude, in a very vast and full way. It is not always easy to feel that; it is sometimes difficult to believe it. Does that sound too bad a thing to say? Are there not times when you really do wonder about this—when for anybody to say in those situations and conditions that the Lord is in an attitude of goodwill toward you sounds almost like mockery? We know this conflict with the evil forces that are always trying to come between us and the Lord, to make the Lord appear evil, as giving Him their own complexion, or giving us their complexion and transferring it to God, suggesting that God is not a God of goodwill. It is a real battle to maintain that position, otherwise there would have been no point in the Lord saying to His disciples, "Fear not, little flock". "You will go to the slaughter, you will know suffering, you will know what it means to have your innocence made into evil by evil-minded people, you will know what it means to have your purity besmirched and blackened, your good name defamed"—all that the Lamb Himself knew, we shall know it as the little flock—but fear not, none of this is evidence that God is against you, none of this is proof that God is other than a God of goodwill toward you. That is something that we must constantly hold on to. It is a part of the very victory that has to be maintained. "Your Father's good pleasure".

THE FROWN OF GOD'S GOODWILL

Now, strangely enough, the very goodwill of God is often hidden behind a frown. I turn to my friend John Bunyan. You know that he had a man called Goodwill. He lived at the wicket gate, and Christian's first contact with Goodwill was when he came to the gate. He saw the notice written up, "Knock and it shall be opened", and he knocked and the man opened. It was Goodwill. But how is he described? "A very grave person called Good-

will". Surely that is a contradiction! Surely that is not right! If we had been describing Goodwill according to our idea, well, we should have said he was a boisterous, hilarious, hearty, jovial sort of person who was just falling over you with beneficence and everything light and helpful and cheerful. But in John Bunyan's story it was a very grave person that Christian met when he met Goodwill at the wicket gate. And, the gate having been opened to him somewhat, and seeing this very grave person and being asked what he wanted and giving his reply, he was suddenly laid hold of by Goodwill with a terrible grasp and pulled in so strongly that he might almost have been torn to pieces. Anything but goodwill, it seemed! Christian did not expect that, and he turned to the man and said, 'Why did you do that?' 'Oh', he said, 'Beelzebub has a castle just over there, and he is always watching for pilgrims coming, so that he can shoot them down before they get through the gate. He was going to shoot you down, so I pulled you in'. Sometimes we need rough handling, and it does not mean it is not goodwill.

This is the marvellous shrewdness and honesty of Bunyan. Why was Goodwill a very grave person? Because of the aspects of the wicket gate. It looked down the way to the city of Destruction; and Goodwill had constantly in full view all that was going on down there—the souls perishing and going to perdition. He saw the road out, and the hard, difficult way from the city of Destruction to the wicket gate, and how many were caught and slain or turned back before they got through. He saw all that. And you cannot live in full view of the awful depredations of sin, Satan and Hell without being a grave person, with all goodwill. He saw the castle of Beelzebub, and the malignant eyes watching for pilgrims, to shoot them down before they could get through; he knew this hatred, this malice of the Evil One; and with all the goodwill in the world he could not but be a grave person in the light of that. And he saw on—he saw the way the pilgrims were going. He knew what they would encounter. He knew all that they had to meet. He knew all the rest of the story contained in that wonderful *Pilgrim's Progress*, which was not always progress as we think of it, for we make progress very often by falls, by mistakes. There are Giants of Despair, and there are deep and

dark valleys, and there are many other things. Goodwill stands looking in all directions, taking in everything, but he is still Goodwill.

The point is that God is disposed like this. Goodwill is not just some soft, happy-go-lucky sort of person. The Lord takes in all the gravity and seriousness of the whole course of things, and He has never promised that we should be exempt from these perils and these dangers. He has not said, 'You will never suffer, you will never be tried'. No. He has promised us nothing short of: "In the world ye have tribulation" (John xvi. 33). But He has said, 'When these things come, do not forget that it is never to be interpreted as indicating that I am disposed toward you otherwise than in this way of goodwill, good pleasure'.

We have to meet, then, our difficulties and go through our trials and believe that in them God's will is good and perfect and acceptable. It is all in the good pleasure of His will. And is it not true that it just works out like that? We sometimes feel, 'Oh, that it might never have been, that this might never have been', and afterward we say, 'God meant it for good; the outcome is good, not evil; I did not see it, I could not see it, but it was the good pleasure of His will'. "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom". Rough handling—but it is good will. Many an adversity, but the goodwill is looking over it all and following the whole course. I can say this out of my own coward heart, that knows only too well what it means to wonder whether the will of God is always good. The Gospel begins with goodwill, and it develops and unfolds to a vast fulness encompassing all ages—the good pleasure of His will.

So He says, "little flock". He immediately, in so saying, admitted that His flock would be very small in comparison. They would be very full of suffering, because they were going the way of the Lamb, 'following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth'. A "little flock". But—'fear not, small, despised, persecuted flock, fear not!' In the midst of all that comes upon the world, remember, it is the Lamb who has everything in hand, and He has it all in hand with a view to having with Him the company of which we read in Revelation xiv. "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom". It is "the good pleasure of his will".

T. A-S.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

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**A WITNESS
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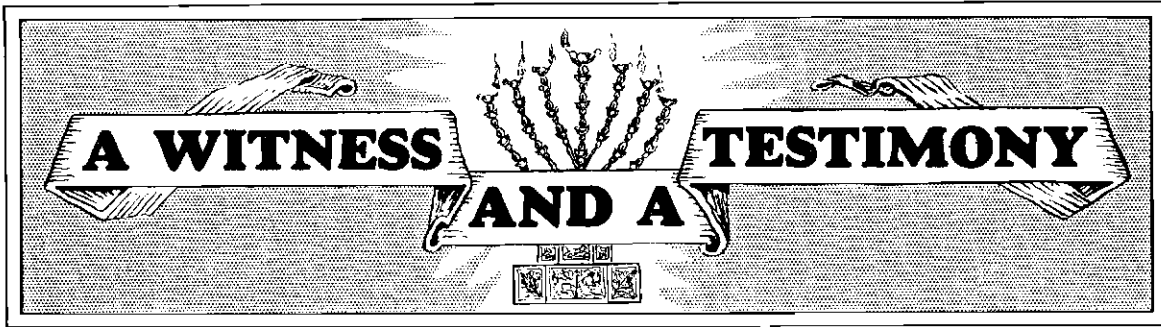
THIS MINISTRY

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

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

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

'Personal' letters should be addressed to
Mr. T. AUSTIN-SPARKS.



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EDITORIAL

Beloved of God,

We are glad to be able to send you this further supply of food, and we are grateful for the many expressions that come to us that it is such.

Food is vital to existence, to growth, to health, to work, to warfare. Food has always been a strategic matter in campaigns. The enemy knows the strategic value of the people's food. Just as his success can be immensely accelerated and guaranteed by cutting off or destroying the food supplies of a temporal object of his aggression, so it is in this great conflict of spiritual kingdoms.

There has been a persistent determination all along to weaken, undermine, and render ineffective the Lord's people by interfering with their food. One of the tragic effects of a poor food supply, or of a shortage of good food, is that people get used to it, take it as all there is, settle down to the poor quality, and lose their appetite for the better because they have no knowledge of its existence.

That can be put the other way. Only by knowing of, and tasting, the better food will people reach after it and make for it. A taste stimulates the appetite.

The Lord's glory and honour are intimately bound up with His people's condition, and His desire is to have them well fed, flourishing, healthy, strong, and able. Such a state is a menace to the interests of the enemy.

Hence there arises a need for the Lord's people, on the one hand to know that plenty of good food is available, and on the other hand to realise that, by any conceivable means, the enemy will keep it from them or them from it.

The question governing this matter must always be: Is this calculated to bring about a fuller measure of Christ in us?

The Apostle Paul's ministry was so largely one of "building up", and that by means of sound and abundant spiritual food. Hence, there was never a ministry more contested by every means—subversion, criticism, misrepresentation, slander, falsehood, and evil report in every place. Oh, how the Devil hates everything and anything that will bring in Christ in greater measure!

In this ministry we have no other and no less an object than that Christ shall find His fulness in His people, and our prayer is that this little messenger may be an ever-growing minister of Him to you.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

The Lord find His pleasure in you in terms of spiritual health, stature, stamina, fruitful labour, and triumphant warfare!

With warmest greetings,

Yours in His grace,

EDITOR.

THE RECOVERING OF THE LORD'S TESTIMONY IN FULNESS

V. WHAT THE WALL SPEAKS OF

Reading: Nehemiah v. 2-6; Luke iv. 14-21; II Kings iv. 1-4.

IN these messages we are allowing Nehemiah, that great servant of the Lord in the old dispensation, to illustrate for us, and to lead us in relation to, the recovering of the Lord's testimony in fulness. Nehemiah said that he was "doing a great work" and that God had put this in his heart. Our concern is with the great work, spiritually corresponding to that which Nehemiah accomplished historically in the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem, which God would do in our time. We are going to look now at some of those things which lay behind the broken state of the wall of Jerusalem. We have observed that the condition of the wall was an illustration or representation of the spiritual condition of the Lord's people at that time. The reasons for the condition of the wall were to be found in the life of the people themselves. We look through the wall to see why it was so, and in so doing we have no difficulty in making a transition from that time to our own time, with a view to seeing what the state is and what needs to be done.

A STATE OF BANKRUPTCY, BONDAGE AND DEATH

The fifth chapter of Nehemiah brings to us the first of the conditions, the particular conditions, which characterized this broken wall, or the people of God as they were at that time reflected in their wall. They were in bondage and bankruptcy. If you could have looked at that wall, you would have said: 'That is a fairly good picture of the bankrupt state of the Lord's people just now.' And that state was a complete contradiction to the mind

and will of the Lord. It was a contradiction to the liberty and affluence of the Lord's people, as He willed it for them. "We bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants" (*Neh. v. 5*). And the Lord Jesus came and proclaimed in prophetic words: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, . . . to proclaim release to the captives, . . . to set at liberty them that are bruised" (*Isaiah lxi. 1; Luke iv. 18*). That is really the mind of the Lord for His people. Bondage always speaks of law and tyranny, and therefore fear. Those things always go together—bondage, law, tyranny, and resultant fear, a life of fear.

THE REBUILT WALL A BULWARK AGAINST FEAR

You will recall another of those incidents in the life of the prophet Elisha, recorded in the second book of the Kings, chapter iv. You know the story, but here it is, gathered into a very few sentences. Death has entered in; the creditor has come demanding payment of that which it is impossible to provide. The law is at the door, threatening to bring into bondage, and fear has taken possession. Over against that situation there is Elisha, the man whom we know to represent and embody the law of the Spirit of life, who is always dealing with situations of death and their consequences. And so Elisha comes on the scene, and by providing life, by exercising "the law of the Spirit of life", he makes it possible to meet all the obligations, satisfies the creditor, destroys the fear, and releases the sons.

That is a beautiful picture of much New Testament truth. Indeed the letter to the Galatians is the interpretation of that little incident. That let-

ter, as you know, deals with sonship in bondage, and shows that the way of release is by the Spirit of life, liberty by the Spirit.

Well, that sets the ground for this application of the message. The Lord Jesus, you see, said: "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me . . . to set at liberty them that are bruised*". It is the Spirit over against the law, the Spirit of life over against the law of sin and death. The Apostle says: "*For ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father*" (Romans viii. 15). To the Galatians the Apostle said: "*For freedom did Christ set us free: stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage*" (Galatians v. 1). Again says the Apostle to the same people, "We were in bondage under the law, but Christ has come over against our bondage to the law" (iv. 3-5). There are those words in the letter to the Hebrews, so familiar: ". . . and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews ii. 15).

What does that mean—"through fear of death"? If you look at the context in the letter to the Hebrews, it is perfectly plain that it is the fear of the consequence of violating the law. That letter is all over against the law, and those Jews knew quite well what the penalty was for violating the law. We know from reading incidents in the Old Testament what it meant for people who violated the law. In some instances they were taken out and stoned; it was death. And so the law hung over them like a sword; they lived in this fear and dread that they might violate the law, and so incur death. "All their lifetime", because of this law, they were "subject to bondage" "through fear of death". But hear the words of another: "*There is no fear in love: because perfect love casteth out fear*" (1 John iv. 18). How true it is!

What is this wall then? Well, in its broken condition it means that something has happened to bring about death. That something is a reign of law which could not be met. The creditor could not be appeased, be satisfied. The law was the creditor. Break the law, and you go into bondage, into servitude; it is death, death to everything, death while you live, to be under that awful burden of the law. Rebuilding the wall, then, just means that in some way a testimony is being recovered that the Lord's people are a free people, that the creditor is paid off and sent about his business, he is satisfied. It means that death has been destroyed, bondage has been broken. They are not only out: they are not merely free, but left poor: they are made affluent with heavenly

riches, as the Lord's free and wealthy people.

Do you not agree that there is a need for something like that to be recovered amongst the people of God to-day? Whether it is Old Testament law or New Testament law, a great many people are not enjoying the liberty of life in the Spirit. Even the New Testament, with its great doctrines, has been crystallized into a system of law, and people are browbeaten by it. Fundamentalism is like that. Fundamentalism, as such, can become just another system of law without life. The truths of it are right, but by itself it falls into the category of that of which the Apostle spoke when he drew a distinction between the letter and the spirit (Romans vii. 6).

In effect he said, 'You can have the letter which is perfectly right, perfectly accurate, perfectly true, but even the truth in accuracy can become something that brings you into bondage and robs you of your liberty and your joy and your wealth.' In other words, the fact that you are perfectly orthodox and correct in your doctrine is not proof that you are one of the Lord's free people enjoying this wealth and this affluence of the Lord. You may be going about with that heavy burden of orthodoxy around your neck and not happy in your Christianity at all, lest you might be violating some principle, some truth. You can be a very miserable person in absolute orthodoxy and correctness of teaching and doctrine. No: while the doctrine must be right, and while we must be in the truth, there is that extra factor which means that you and I are God's liberated people; we are enjoying the liberty of the Spirit and the life of the Spirit.

So this wall represents or speaks of a bulwark against fear. Any city wall means that. That is what it is for, if it is worth its name; and, mark you, they used to build walls very soundly and very thoroughly in those days. They were no jerry-built things that would go over, whatever Tobiah may say—"If a fox go up, he shall break down their stone wall" (Nehemiah iv. 3). Let all the foxes in creation go up against this wall and they will not upset it. Walls are meant to be bulwarks against fear. You get inside that wall, and you are safe, you are free from fear—free from the sense of being brought into captivity. That is the meaning of the wall.

Now the testimony that the Lord would have should be after that kind—that the Lord's people know that they are in an absolutely sure and safe place. They need have no fear at all: all fear is destroyed; they are not in the bondage of fear. They have been gloriously delivered. To use the

words of the Galatian letter again, they are *sons*. They are not slaves; they have come now to a Father. They are not just pupils—for the Apostle, as you know, says that the law was our tutor (Gal. iii. 24). But we are not any longer under the tutor. We are sons, not pupils; we are sons, not prisoners. As sons, we are free.

The wall, then, speaks of safety, security, of deliverance from the bondage of fear—and oh that the Lord might have a people like that!

Now, what is your testimony? The Lord's testimony truly is like that. What is yours? Are you living in bondage—New Testament bondage—bondage to fear? Are you living every day in fear of doing wrong, under the threat of the 'big stick', even the stick of your own conscience? Are you in fear, with a miserable face, because of this awful tyranny? That is not the Lord's will for us. The Lord wants His people completely delivered from fear: for "*ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father*" (Romans viii. 15).

ALL DEBTS PAID

This wall, then, also speaks of debts all paid and the rich emoluments of grace. That is simple, basic Gospel, but it is glorious. All debts paid, the creditor satisfied. The Lord Jesus did that for us in His Cross. He paid all the debt to the law, satisfied the law, and sent the creditor about his business. He set us free from him—the law; set us free from all our debts. Oh, it is a wonderful thing to know that all your spiritual debts are paid. It is a terrible thing to know that you have to face up to that law of God and answer to it—that, if someone does not pay your debts, you have somehow to meet that demand in time and eternity. But the true child of God, who knows what Christ has done for him or for her, is always ready to sing—

'Free from the law—oh, happy condition!
Jesus hath bled, and *there* is remission".

THE FRANCHISE OF THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM

Then this wall, being the wall of Jerusalem, pointing to another Jerusalem, a spiritual heavenly Jerusalem, speaks of the heavenly franchise, the franchise of the heavenly Jerusalem, heaven's free men.

You remember on one occasion, when the Apostle Paul was taken prisoner, he was brought

to the Roman centurion, and was going to be examined by scourging: that is, they were going to apply the 'third degree' method of getting out of him what all this was about. Our translation does not give us the full force of what was taking place. It just tells us that he was 'tied up'. Really literally it is: 'they had stretched him out'; and this method applied by the Romans was a very severe one indeed. So terrible was the laying on with the scourges, the man having been stretched out with his hands and feet securely tied, that it often resulted in death, or in being crippled for life. When Paul was placed in that position, he asked: "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?" (Acts xxii. 25). The officer, thinking he had got a good case, replied: "With a great sum obtained I this citizenship". 'I bought my freedom to do as I like—I am just exercising my right as a free man, for which I have paid a great price.' Paul answered: "But I was free born" (A.V.).

Now, when the senior officer was told what Paul had said, a terrible fear came over him that he should have taken a free man, a free-born citizen of the Roman Empire, and not only brought him into chains and bonds, but have come within an inch of thrashing him. A free-born man should not be dealt with like that. He had the franchise of the Empire behind him. Even more was it to be free-born than to buy your freedom. To be free-born meant that you could not be brought into bondage, you could not be thrashed, you could not be dealt with like that, and woe betide the man who essayed to do it—he had to answer to the Emperor. All the strength of the Roman Empire was behind the man who was free-born, and Paul knew what that meant. So the officer became full of terror when he realised that he was treating a free-born man like this.

Do you see the illustration? Yes: we are first-born sons, says the Word; our names are enrolled in heaven, we have the franchise of the Kingdom of God; we cannot be brought into bondage, we cannot be thrashed by the law, we cannot be dealt with like this, dealt with so hardly, by this tyrant. No matter what his claims may be of right to do it, there is a higher claim. It is the claim of sonship. You cannot deal with God's sons as you deal with other people. It is a wonderful illustration of this great truth.

The wall of Jerusalem means that here is something which is the enclosure of a heavenly people, who have been delivered from bondage, set at liberty from all debts, and are walking in the good of sonship—God's free people and God's wealthy

people. That is the truth of the Word of God. Sonship is something to be enjoyed, and *that* wall is no picture of joy and the state of those people is no picture of joy. It is a contradiction to what the Lord would have. *This* is how He would have it, as we have just seen.

A RESTORED SABBATH

Now the next thing—the Sabbath. There are fourteen references to the Sabbath Day in the book of Nehemiah. It is a matter of the nullified Sabbath. If you want proof of that, go to Malachi, the contemporary of Nehemiah; you know what he has to say about it. But here in this book of Nehemiah fourteen times the Sabbath is mentioned, so it has a very large place. We know that these people represented the nullifying of the Sabbath. Now I am not going to start on an argument for Seventh Day Adventism or for Sabbatarianism; the ground is very much higher and more glorious than that. But remember that the Sabbath was the oldest covenant in existence. God rested from His labours on the seventh day, and God hallowed the seventh day and demanded that it should be hallowed all the way through. If you will look the matter up, you will see how much in the life of the people of God, for good or for ill, was bound up with their observance of the Sabbath, the covenant of the Sabbath—perhaps the foundation covenant, the covenant of all covenants.

But what did it mean? Of course, it was a foreshadowing of Christ. God rested from His labour, from all His works, on the seventh day, “*and God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it*” (*Gen. ii. 2, 3*). Israel went into captivity in Babylon because they had not kept the Lord’s Sabbaths—the seventh day, the seventh month, the seventh year and the sevens of sevens up to forty-nine. They had failed to observe the Sabbath in all its connections, so He sent them into Babylon for seventy years because of His Sabbaths. “*Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*” (*Galatians vi. 7*). It is the ‘*whatsoever*’ always. And now that broken-down wall speaks of the broken Sabbath, the nullified Sabbath; and Nehemiah is found restoring the Sabbath, and you know he did it in a very vigorous way. When the merchants came to the gates on the Sabbath Day, he chased them away, he handled them very roughly, and restored the Sabbath.

What is it all about? I have said that it pointed on to Christ—Christ who, in the new creation, has finished all God’s works, the works of a new crea-

tion; has brought again satisfaction to God, and God into His rest, the rest of His satisfaction: so that Christ and His accomplished work are now the Sabbath. The Sabbath is not a day; it is a Person. The Sabbath is not a time matter at all. The Sabbath is a work finished, and so any violation of it is severely dealt with by the Lord. It means this—take one little bit away from the fully accomplished work of Christ and the absolute satisfaction of God with Him, and you violate the principle of the Sabbath, you undercut the covenant. If that were only realised, it would destroy Seventh Day Adventism in five minutes. Well, you say, are we not to observe the Lord’s Day? Oh, yes—but as a testimony, not as a matter of law. We come together now on one day, the first day of the week, to celebrate the glorious truth that God is satisfied with His Son—that is, we gathet around His Table and worship in the values of Jesus Christ, God’s ground of satisfaction. Take anything from that and you violate the Sabbath.

Now the testimony to be recovered just means that there must be a people who are enjoying the fact, rejoicing in the great reality, that the work of redemption is finished gloriously: God is at rest, completely satisfied, and His people have entered into His rest. It is very simple, perhaps, as it is put like that, but are we not tested on this thing? Almost every day of our lives we are tested about the Sabbath—not merely as a day, but as to our rest in God’s satisfaction, as to our contentment with God’s contentment: in other words, as to our apprehension of the fact that Christ has altogether finished the new creation in Himself, and has brought God an answer to His last demand and requirement. God wants a people who are rejoicing in that; He wants a testimony like that. The Lord make us a people after that kind! The wall speaks of that, because, as you notice, as soon as the wall is completed, Nehemiah, who had paid his visit back to Babylon and returned, began to put the Sabbath in its place and clean up everything in relation to the Sabbath.

RESTORED PURITY OF BLOOD

One more thing for the moment—the state of mixture which existed. We are told that the children of the people could not speak in the Hebrew language. They spoke half in one language, half in another. And then we read about the mixed marriages with the people of the nations outside—so many of the men had foreign wives. Here were elements, features, of mixture amongst the Lord’s people, and Nehemiah set to work to clean

that up. He did it very thoroughly—and, thank God, the people co-operated with him. It was necessary as a spiritual principle that this should be done; but here again, mixture being one of the conditions represented by the wall—the wall was broken down and destroyed because there was not a purity in Israel—in its rebuilding it was a bulwark against mixture of blood.

That says something very strong and very definite—the necessity for everyone who claims to have any place in the city of God, in the Church of God, in the Kingdom of God, to be able to prove that their blood is pure, that they really are born from above, they have the pure life of the Lord in them, they are not a mixed people in their constitution—they are a people of one tongue, of one language, of one blood, of one life. The wall being re-erected was to be a testimony to a ‘cleaning up’ in this matter of mixture among the Lord’s people: a purity of blood, a purity of language, a purity of worship.

You know how possible it is to mix these things up. You very often find people who are talking the language or the phraseology, but you hardly recognise it as the language of the Spirit. Oh, they have got all the Christian phraseology, but there is a lot of mixture here, a lot of contradiction in the life here. There must be a people of a pure language, those who truly speak the language of the Spirit. Is it not true that there are many professing Christians who do not speak the language of the Spirit? Many of you know what I mean. Yes, you miss something. There is something about their way of speaking of ‘Christianity’ and ‘religion’ which does not say that they have really been born from above.

THE RESTORED TITHE

And I close with this other thing—defaulting in the tithe. Malachi, who depicts the conditions at that time, charges the people with defaulting in the matter of the Lord’s tithe. He says, speaking from God: “*Ye rob me, even this whole nation.*” “*But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings*” (Malachi iii. 9, 8). There was default in the matter of the tithe.

But what is this? Oh, do not think that we can get out of this by just taking a tenth part of our

earnings and giving it to the Lord. You can do that and not be giving the tithe at all. What does it mean, this tithe? It was like this. Tithes were given of everything—of their earnings, of their field, of their vineyard, of their flocks; and what happened was that the farmer or the husbandman or the shepherd would watch carefully for the first ripe fruits, the first product to reach maturity, the first animal to come forth, to come into life, to live. He watched, as, supposing it were the field, the corn was growing, and as the time drew near he would take a walk out to see the state of the corn and watch for the first ripe ears: and as soon as he saw ripe ears, he did not wait for the whole harvest to ripen, he took them to the house of God, and he said, in effect: ‘This represents the fact that all belongs to You, Lord. This is a forerunner, a firstfruit of what is to come. It is all Yours, and I give this as a token that it is all Yours, that You have the first place and the whole place.’ If it were the fruit, the husbandman did the same. If it were the shepherd, he took the firstling of the flock and said: ‘Lord, this is the firstling of this flock; it betokens that all is Yours—Yours is the first place, and Yours shall be the whole place.’

That is the tithe. The tithe is not something detached and given to God, while we have the rest. It is a token that the Lord has *the* place from beginning to end. Now, you see, that was the trouble with Israel—defaulting in the matter of the tithe—and that was why the testimony had broken down. The Lord did not have the first place and the whole place in all their interests, in all their matters, in all their possessions. The Lord wants a people like that, who really do bear that testimony. He would raise up the wall of testimony again in a people who do not just give Him a place, a part, but who give Him the *whole* place, and are always on the look-out as to how they can bring Him that which is His right—a people like that.

Suffer the simplicity of these words, but they go deeper than perhaps you recognise. They touch very vital matters. All this is very practical. When Nehemiah put these things right, he was not just building a wall. He was putting right the things which the wall represented; the testimony was supported by spiritual reality behind. That is what the Lord wants.

T. A-S.

THE CHURCH AS GOD WANTS IT TO-DAY

“ . . . to the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord ” (Ephesians iii. 10, 11).

THE Holy Spirit is intensely practical. He has no use for those who live in a world of day-dreams, those who form mental pictures of Scriptural truth but do nothing about their realisation. That is why one of the salient words in the above quotation is the adverb ‘ now ’. It would not be difficult to extract from the letter to the Ephesians an exposition of the meaning of the Church which would find general acceptance. All of us believe that some day, somehow, there is going to be a Church really showing forth Christ in His fulness. Many a student of this Scripture has found his heart aglow at the prospect of such a spiritual community of saints, full of Divine power and love, living right above the world in heavenly victory, charged with Resurrection life and sweeping majestically on to fulfil its great destiny of bringing perfect satisfaction to the heart of God. Alas! the glow has vanished in the facing of the practical implications, and so the temptation has arisen to put off the vision to some future date. ‘ Ephesians ’ may be true some day. Some day—but not to-day! This surely is a lack of faith, putting off to the future because it seems so impossible in the present. It is more than that—it is a direct contradiction of the revelation itself, which declares that God wants a Church like this to-day. The word is: “. . . to the intent that NOW . . . ”

THIS IS THE HOUR

Now is the time for sinners to be saved. This is the hour for us all to be up and doing in making Christ known to needy men. There is no doubt about that. And surely it is equally the hour for saved sinners to live together as God meant them to, the hour in which the Lord should have full liberty to gather His people together in the Spirit, the hour in which men should find it to be a mighty spiritual experience to be functioning as the Church. This is the hour to get back to first things, away from the traditional and artificial to the spiritual and the vital. Are we really in a Church which expresses the “ manifold wisdom of God ”? Do we truly bring such a vital impact to bear in

spiritual realms, or are we rather a cause for angels to weep and demons to deride? The challenge comes to us all. Will we just enthuse about the past, will we only dream of the future, or will we face the cost of going all out now for the true expression of the Church as God wants it? It is the Holy Spirit who says it should be “ now ”.

CHRIST THE WISDOM OF GOD

Only the Church can fit into God’s method of revealing His great wisdom in Christ ; only through us can He realise His eternal purpose. God has devised a plan. It is not just for the forgiveness of the individual, though it includes that, but it is a great scheme for glorious blessing on a universal scale. By this purpose He proposes to solve every problem, banish every fear, realise every hope and right every wrong. This is the wonderful wisdom of God ; it is a practical way of answering every challenge and meeting every need, His plan, or, as it is called, “ his eternal purpose ”, is to demonstrate in human experience how utterly sufficient Christ is. He wants to show the universe that for everything Christ is the answer. We know what it is like when one single person discovers in real experience how sufficient Christ is. There is a glow of glory, even though the experience is only partial. One day, however, the whole universe is to make that discovery, and words fail to describe the blaze of glory which will then burst forth.

Christ is God’s answer, and it is His plan to make Christ available to all in every realm, to the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills, and moreover to make Him available through the Church. It is the Church’s vocation to apply the universal sovereign remedy of Christ to all creation. That is God’s plan, and He has no alternative. The Church is called in to express the complete sufficiency of Christ. In the midst of a universe of unsolved problems, it is meant to be a little world which has all its problems solved, a world living in the present good of the fact that Christ is the answer. This is indeed “ the wisdom of God ” ; it involves not only the complete removal of the curse but the fulfilment of all Heaven’s high ambitions for man. It is so many-sided, so “ manifold ” that it can only be expressed by the variety and inter-relatedness of a community. Yes, God has done the right thing in the right way ; He has solved every human problem. Upon the Church is placed the privilege and responsibility of proclaiming this glorious fact, not

merely in words, but in its own experience.

IMPORTANCE OF OUR SECRET LIFE

We may wonder why such emphasis is laid on the testimony to heavenly beings. Perhaps it is because they are most able to appreciate how much is mere profession and how much is inward reality. The Church is called upon to proclaim Christ by living in the practical good of what He is, by showing every day and in every matter that Christ truly is God's answer. "Principalities and powers in the heavenly places" may sound rather weird and remote, but they are far from that. We must not think of their realm as being far away from the earth. We shall understand better what is intended if we think not so much of those who are distant as of those who are unseen. That is the point: there is an unseen realm which is not deceived by appearances, but is able to penetrate to the heart of the matter and to assess true values. There are hidden intelligent beings who, though unseen themselves, can see us, and can see into us, or, as we often say, can 'see through' us. They see now that which will one day be manifest to all. They are not at all impressed by popular judgments or seeming values, for they readily detect what is of Christ and what is not. God intends that they shall, and intends too that the Church shall constantly be confronting them with an up-to-date setting forth of His great victory in Christ. Whenever such intelligences see a group living together in the power of Christ's life, they have to admit that God's wisdom has solved the problem of the universe. They may be good and enjoy the sight, or they may be bad and hate it, but there can be no gainsaying the fact that in such a company they are brought face to face with a triumphant God.

THE CHURCH'S EXPRESSION OF CHRIST

If it is the Church which means so much to God, we need to enquire more closely into its nature, to know what the Word says as to the practical constitution of the Church and the manner in which it should function, in order to fulfil this Divine intention of showing forth the manifold wisdom of God. If it were something which happened automatically as a result of sinners being saved, there would have been no call for the careful explanation of Paul's writings, no need for his earnest exhortations and no need for his labourings in prayer. He realised the danger of putting everything off to some vague future, and insisted that there was something which God required of

His Church *now*. The days have changed, but the Word of God remains the same, and still the Spirit urges God's people not only to be true to the work of witnessing and evangelizing, but to come together and live together, so that now the supreme witness to Christ may be given "by the church". How can such a Church express Christ?

(i) BY ITS LIFE

The Church is to express Christ by its life. In its individual members and families, and in its communal experience, there must be a continual setting aside of the natural in favour of the spiritual, a displacing of what men are in themselves by a true working of Christ in them. Is it necessary to insist that no group or company which consists of a mixture of believers and unbelievers has any right at all to call itself a church? It ought not to be. The very minimum requirement for a local church is that all its members should have been born from above and begun their history in virtue of absolutely new life in Christ. There is no substitute for this new life. No amount of sincerity, earnestness or orthodoxy can ever be acceptable without it. A church is not a group of people trying to live for Christ; it is a family whose very existence is based on the common factor of Christ dwelling within.

This, of course, is fundamental, but it is only the beginning. Right through to the end it is the Spirit's concern to produce a new uprising of Divine life as a constant experience of the Church. To this end He must seek to counter and nullify the old life of nature, which at every point will try to re-assert itself, taking hold of the things of God and masquerading as God's servant. "The Spirit [lusteth] against the flesh" (Galatians v. 17). He knows it to be the mortal enemy of Christ and He fights it with His weapon of the Cross. There can be no true testimony to the life of Christ unless the Cross is allowed to work continually both in individuals and in the company as a whole. The Cross will challenge and upset everything that is of the will of the flesh or the will of man in an assembly, in order to keep the way open for that which is born of God. All kinds of tendencies and activities which are due to temperamental or other human causes will be withstood by the Spirit. Any course of behaviour which is based on natural judgments or the expression of personal wishes, any mere imitation of some other church, any wrong dependence upon another church, will quench the Spirit, and impede that expression of the living Christ in the midst which is the very reason for the Church's existence.

(II) BY ITS UNITY

The Church is to express Christ by its unity. The quorum of the Church is not a matter of numbers but of oneness of spirit. It is the "two or three . . . gathered together in my name" who give a vital proof of the reality of Christ. This follows on from what has already been said about life, for it is natural life which produces divisions, whereas Christ's life is indivisible. How easy it is to talk superficially about being one!—but this kind of unity is a very deep experience. We are sometimes inclined to think of the Body of Christ as a mere symbol or illustration, but I Corinthians xii. 14 - 26 makes it very clear that the outworking is to be most practical, and that we are to expect the different faculties to be found in a working relationship for the glory of the Head in every assembly. Each church should be a real expression of the Body on a small scale, and a healthy body at that, one in which the various members are integrated and co-ordinated, being animated by the one life of Christ and energized by His love. A church, if it is to be a true one, must recognise unity, must practise unity, must fight for unity, if necessary must suffer for unity—a unity which is made possible by the constant willingness for crucifixion. It is not only that disunity means weakness; that is obvious in any group of men. It is that any failure in love between members is a denial of Christ; it is an expression of what men are, instead of being a setting forth of the one Christ.

This love, moreover, must flow freely to all saints. Any tendency toward an exclusive or sectional spirit is an outrage to the one Body. A group can only represent the one Body of Christ if it is pervaded by a pure spirit of loving concern and fellowship for all who are truly Christ's. This is much easier to say than to practise. Paul and Peter had quite different functions and ministries, yet they could and did keep true love and loyalty to each other in the Lord. Their partisans at Corinth, however, sat down at the same Table and yet were filled with rivalry and a spirit of division. We must remember that any failure in the matter of gracious esteem and sympathy for the Lord's people, outside of our own immediate circle as well as within it, jeopardises the very truth which the Church was brought into being to proclaim. Nevertheless a wrong or unwise attempt to work for unity may equally vitiate the testimony to Christ. A church cannot sacrifice its God-given principles just to please or placate others; it cannot permit an invasion by all and sundry who may

want to use it to find a platform for their ministry or support for their work, nor can it dissipate its energies in trying to be closely linked up with every movement which the Lord is truly blessing and using. It must retain its liberty in the Lord. Only a deep 'rooting and grounding in love' can enable us to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace".

(III) BY ITS ORDER

The Church is meant to express Christ by its order: in other words, by its complete submission to the rule of the Spirit. It must proclaim that Christ is on the Throne not only in words but by prompt obedience to His government in all things. There was no officialdom and no human organization in the early Church, but there was real discipline and amazing efficiency. The Holy Spirit is a real Person, and will administer the will of the Lord if He is allowed to do so. It is quite clear from the early chapters of the Acts that when those who were in responsibility spoke, the people knew it to be the voice of the Spirit. But this was only possible because the men themselves were so utterly committed to absolute obedience to the Spirit. There was a certain spiritual structure in the Church, which was something more than human leadership, though it was exercised through human beings, and there was among them all a spirit of glad submission to every fresh revelation of the Lord's will. Is this still the case? If it were we should not be lamenting the weakness and ineffectiveness of the Church as we do. So often men's minds are made up as to the course which they will pursue, so there is no question of their seeking in the Scriptures the mind of the Lord. There are matters which they are not prepared to reconsider. Everybody knows that a real revival would smash up these human rules and fixed institutions, and yet how many are prepared for the smashing and reconstituting?

The Church's message is that Christ is Lord of all. That message can only have its true impact if the Church's procedure is in every way a true expression of that lordship. There is no need for any rash or impetuous attempt to change the present order. All that is needed is that a people should covenant together that in future they will obey all new light which the Lord brings to them, not counting the cost, and only delaying to make quite certain that it is the Lord who calls for the adjustment. What a new impact of Christ this would mean!

(IV) BY ITS GROWTH

The Church is to express Christ by its growth. Much that is called 'Christianity' may be static, as any other human institution, but *Christ* can never be that. His abundant life must find expression in constant flow and movement, in advance and increase. This is true as to numbers. We must be always concerned for the prospering of the Spirit's work of adding to the Church those who are being saved. It must also be true of understanding. The Scriptures are the full and final revelation of the mind of God, but who dare claim to have perceived all their wealth of meaning? The Spirit must be free to move from one emphasis to another; He must be permitted to recover forgotten truths or to bring new truths to light. The Church must have ears to hear what the Spirit says, and must be prepared for unexpected or unpleasant truths if necessary.

This may call for adjustment in the ministry. No one man can expect to compass all the Divine revelation, for even the apostle Paul—unique as he was—could not write the whole New Testament. Surely, then, a healthy church should provide opportunity for the Lord to vary His messenger if and when He so wishes; not seeking variety for variety's sake, but careful lest the Lord should be limited by any one man's limitations. The ministry of the Word, like everything else in the Church, should be corporate and not individual.

It will certainly call for adjustment in the hearing. We can never grow by listening only to what we like or agree with, nor can we be sensitive to the Spirit's voice if we allow personal preferences or prejudices to affect our attitude to the Lord's messenger. A church should be a place where God's people can receive "the spiritual milk

which is without guile" and "grow thereby unto salvation".

Not that growth comes by hearing alone, for it is the result of exercise and obedience. For a church to be giving true expression to Christ, therefore, it is necessary that there should be opportunity and occasion for all its members to put to use their Spirit-given gifts. The whole Church must be in the ministry! It is the art of leadership to develop, encourage and, if necessary, correct these activities, but not to suppress them nor try to combine all the gifts in certain individuals who are called 'ministers'. What God is looking for is a vital manifestation of His Son, and for that end it is essential that the whole Church should be in a state of constant spiritual growth.

THERE SHOULD BE SUCH A CHURCH TO-DAY

This, then, in brief is the way in which the Church lived and functioned at the beginning, and it is specifically stated that God's intent is that it should be found like that to-day. He wants it to be an evident expression of Christ, the wisdom and the power of God—so evident that even heavenly beings have to take note of it and reckon with it. Only the Spirit of God can raise up and maintain such churches, but even He can only do so where He finds those who are willing to pay the price of spiritual reality and wholeheartedness. For if it is true that heavenly powers are eagerly on the watch for such a vital setting forth of Christ, it is also true that satanic powers are quick to detect its beginnings and ruthless in their determination at all costs to make it impossible. We need a new concentration of prayer to this one intent, "... that now ... might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God."

H.F.

THE SPIRIT OF GLORY

"These things spake Jesus; and lifting up his eyes to heaven, he said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that the Son may glorify thee" (John xvii. 1).

"If ye are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are ye; because THE SPIRIT OF GLORY and the Spirit of God resteth upon you" (I Peter iv. 14).

THE Holy Spirit is the Spirit of glory. All the Holy Spirit's interests and concerns and activities have glory as their object and have nothing else in view by which to satisfy Him. Glory is the ob-

ject and the end of all God's works and ways—numerous, various and largely unsearchable and inexplicable as they are. His object in everything is glory—and moreover that glory has to do with us. The Scripture precisely states that we are 'called into His kingdom and glory' (I Thess. ii. 12); and many other like statements affirm the same thing—that God's concern for us is glory.

THE SOURCE AND GROUND OF GLORY

Let us look first of all at the source and the ground of glory, the glory which concerns us and

with which, through the grace of God, we are concerned. The source and the ground of the glory can be simply stated as being Christ glorified. Christ glorified is the source of glory for us and the ground of glory for us.

When He was here on the earth He was not here in glory. He was here in humiliation, and humiliation for Him meant voluntary self-emptying. "He emptied himself" (Phil. ii. 7). In this very chapter in John's Gospel we have that wonderful utterance of His: "Father, glorify thou me . . . with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John xvii. 5). Humiliation meant voluntary self-emptying. It meant no self-fulness. "I can of myself do nothing" (John v. 30). It meant voluntarily accepting a life of complete dependence. The fact of the Holy Spirit coming upon Him and taking charge, immediately leading Him into the wilderness, and all the way through to the end, when He "through the eternal Spirit offered himself" (Heb. ix. 14), means that He was dependent, He became dependent; there was no self-sufficiency.

It meant voluntary, self-weakness. We are told that He was "crucified through weakness" (II Cor. xiii. 4). He accepted that weakness—which meant that He drew every bit of strength from another source. There was no self-strength.

And then it meant voluntary acceptance of shame and dishonour—and what shame, what dishonour! They degraded Him according to their own mind. No self-glory, no self-esteem. "He humbled himself" (Phil. ii. 8). He was not here then in glory. For one brief moment on the Mount of Transfiguration He was glorified. But it passed. John says: "Jesus was not yet glorified" (John vii. 39).

The fact that He lived such a life of prayer is the proof, the inclusive mark, of all this. He had to draw everything from outside Himself. These opening words of John xvii are very remarkable words, far too profound for our fathoming, altogether beyond us; they would take us completely out of our depths. He was God, very God, and He is praying to God. Something has happened, for God does not pray to God, God does not ask God for things. You see the point. It does not mean that He was other than the Divine Son, the Son of God, very God; but He had for the time being taken a place in which all that was suspended.

But when God raised Him and took Him back, He reversed all that. When Jesus was glorified, it was in every respect just the opposite of His humiliation. That is, He is now no longer emptied—He is full. God has filled Him with all things. Paul speaks of God's "riches in glory" which are "in

Christ Jesus" for us (Phil. iv. 19). He is filled with all the riches of glory for His own people; full, sufficient—yes, self-sufficient; all sufficiency is in Him. Paul says that in the Colossian letter. He, being filled with all things, has all sufficiency, and we are made sufficient in Him. He is made powerful—"the ruler of the kings of the earth" (Rev. i. 5). No longer weak, but mighty with all the might of Heaven and God. And no longer in shame and dishonour and reproach, but in Heaven "crowned with glory and honour", says the Word (Heb. ii. 9). God gave Him honour and glory (II Pet. i. 17). This is the Scripture. He gave Him "the name which is above every name" (Phil. ii. 9). Jesus glorified is the source of glory, the basis of glory.

GLORY FOR US ON THE BASIS OF HIS COMPLETED WORK

But then what does that mean? What does this circuit from the glory to the shame, and back to the glory, mean for us? It means that glory for us is upon the basis of His completed work. The glory springs spontaneously out of His glorification, and His glorification is because of the completeness of the work which He did. That means that He has put away everything that is not glorious and that cannot be glorified, in order to make glory for us possible and actual. His completed work is embodied in His own glorified person.

You have probably noted in this rich seventeenth chapter of John how frequently He makes the affirmation—"I have . . .", "I have . . .". The 'I have's' of John xvii are the basis of glory. "I glorified thee on the earth" (v. 4). There has never been another man on this earth who has glorified God in this way, who has satisfied the requirements of the glory of God as He did. In man-form He has glorified God perfectly. "I glorified thee . . . having accomplished the work which thou hast given me to do" (v. 4). "I manifested thy name unto the men whom thou gavest me" (v. 6). "I manifested thy name". Not merely 'I spoke Thy name', 'I mentioned Thy name', 'I gave them a title for God', but "I manifested thy name"—quite a different thing. To manifest the Name, make manifest what God is—that was His life.

"The words which thou gavest me I have given unto them" (v. 8), and "I have given them thy word" (v. 14); and they live for ever because He gave them the Word and the words of God, just as we do. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. iv. 4). "I have given them thy word". We live by the Word of God. If we do not lay hold

of the Word of God and believe it, if we do not have faith in the promises of God, we die very quickly. It is one thing or the other. Those words are going to be our life or they are not, according to our attitude toward them. He gave them the foundation of life with God in giving His words and His Word. "The glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them" (John xvii, 22). All these "I haves"—if we got inside of them, opened them up, analysed them, we should find that they are the perfect basis of glory.

But inclusively they mean that the basis of glory is His full mediatorial work—His work as Mediator between God and man. That is inclusive. First of all, His work in relation to *sin*. Sin is the thing which makes glory impossible. Sin is the thing which covers the glory. We know it. The glory fades where there is sin. God can never be glorified or give glory where there is sin. But, blessed be God, the Word is full of the affirmation that God intends that there shall be glory, and that He has secured His intention by what His Son has done in relation to the thing that is in the way of the glory. Sin is dealt with—has been dealt with completely and utterly. Then *self* is always in the way of the glory; we know that. What we are in ourselves—that is always hindering the glory, spoiling the glory, driving out or shutting out the glory. Christ has dealt with it. He has taken us, as to what we are in ourselves, and put us out of God's sight. And more, it is the works of the *Devil* that have covered the glory in this world, got in the way of the glory; but He was "manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (I John iii, 8), and Satan's works were taken up by Him and destroyed. Blessed be God!

And all human helplessness was compassed by that helplessness which He voluntarily accepted. Yes, I know there are two sides to the whole story. He is laying down His life and no man is taking it from Him (John x, 18). He is perfectly deliberate in what He is doing. He is fulfilling the predetermined counsels of God when He goes to the Cross. Nevertheless, in a certain sense He is in the hands of those men. There is weakness, helplessness. "He was crucified through weakness" (II Cor. xiii, 4). They appeal to Him to come down, and they deride Him. "He saved others; himself he cannot save" (Matt. xxvii, 42). How true those words were. He could not save Himself because He was saving the whole world. It is a law. You will never save anybody if you try to save yourself. But that was so in His case in a deeper sense. All human helplessness was compassed in the weakness of that beloved Man. All this human helplessness of ours is in the

way of the glory. You know it well enough. If you begin to sink down into your own weakness and helplessness, into what you *are*, in that way, and say, 'I cannot', where is the glory? It departs. While conscious always of dependence and emptiness and weakness in ourselves, there is another attitude which we may take, which lets in the glory.

'Glory crowns the Mercy-seat'—that is the point; and spell Mercy-seat with a capital M, for it is the Lord Jesus. 'Glory crowns the Mercy-seat'. Go back to the Old Testament again. It was there in the Most Holy Place, at the Mercy-seat, that the glory had its focal point. They were called the "cherubim of glory" (Heb. ix, 5) as they overshadowed the Mercy-seat. It is the place of glory. But what is the Mercy-seat? It is the Throne of grace, the blood-sprinkled meeting-place between God and man. Look at what Israel were in themselves: what a story of everything dishonourable, as to all that they were in themselves. But this perfect God meets them in His Mediator at the Mercy-seat—'and glory', not shame, 'crowns the Mercy-seat'. His work accomplished, in all these respects and much more, is the basis of all glory for us. We need to get a firmer hold on it and keep our hold on it, or else the glory will go out. The measure of our faith-hold on Christ glorified is the measure of the glory in our lives. No matter how much we may believe and hold to the doctrines of our redemption, atonement, justification, and all the rest, unless we have an inward hold on the truth of Christ glorified, the doctrine counts for nothing so far as the glory is concerned.

THE MEDIATOR OF THE GLORY

Then come nearer. The Mediator of the glory. "The Spirit of glory . . . resteth upon you" (I Pet. iv, 14). The Holy Spirit has come as the Spirit of the glorified Christ. "The Spirit was not yet given: because Jesus was not yet glorified" (John vii, 39). Putting that round the other way, we might say, 'Well, the Holy Spirit could only come on the ground of Jesus being glorified, and Jesus could only be glorified when He had finished His work: so the Spirit comes on the ground of Christ glorified, in virtue of the perfected work of our redemption, of our sanctification, and of our glorification.' He has come as the Spirit of Christ in glory, as the Mediator of all that it means that Christ is in glory; and let us remember that glory is not a place but a state. When we receive the Holy Spirit, as we do when we are born from above, we receive the Spirit of glory. He is called "the Spirit of glory"; that is the capacity in which He has

come: so that we receive Him as that, and if we live and abide in the Spirit, the Spirit of glory rests upon us. If we get out of the Spirit, the glory gets out of us. Any of us, at any time, getting out of the Spirit, gets out of the glory. When we are out of the glory, in some way or other, for any reason, we have got out of the Spirit. We know that to be the case all too well. When we are in the Spirit there is glory.

Let us turn to our friend John Bunyan. 'After these things the Interpreter takes them apart again and has them first into a room where was a man that could look no way but downwards with a muck-rake in his hand. There stood one over his head with a celestial crown in his hand and proffered him that crown for his muck-rake, but the man did neither look up nor regard but raked to himself the straws, the small sticks, the dust of the floors.' Oh, our muck-raking amongst the rubbish and filth and pollution of what we are in ourselves, turning it over and sorting it out, looking no way but downward! Where is the glory? There is no glory in that.

Let us regard the statements of the New Testament seriously and in a practical way. He has 'borne our sins in His own body on the tree' (I Pet. ii. 24). We were "crucified with Christ" (Gal. ii. 20). God has "raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him" (Eph. ii. 6), has given us to share His place in heaven. He has "called (us) unto his eternal glory" (I Pet. v. 10). We are "sanctified in Christ Jesus" (I Cor. i. 2). It is all there as accomplished fact. It is the way of the glory, the only ground of the glory. No one muck-raking in human depravity can ever be in the Holy Spirit. That is a solemn and serious thing to say. You are not in the Spirit if you are muck-raking. The Holy Spirit takes away the muck-rake and gives you a crown of glory in its place—not hereafter, but now. He is against all muck-raking.

Let us remember that whatever the Holy Spirit ministers is intended for glory. A ministry by the Holy Spirit is a ministry which ministers glory. We may have to preach Romans vi and preach Romans vi forcibly. We were crucified with Christ. But that truth was never intended to bring us under condemnation and depression. It was intended to bring us to glory. The ministry of any one truth, unbalanced and unrelated, will bring a heavy burden upon us, will weigh us down and make us depressed people. Such is not Holy Ghost ministry. There are times for us to be convicted of wrong, but the Spirit would lead us at once to the place where the wrong is put right in the Cross of the Lord Jesus, to get it out of the way to make

room for the glory. Yes, solemn words, serious words, if necessary: the Lord will make real to us what fallen human nature is, but always and only to get it all out of the way and to lead at once to the glory.

THE PATHWAY TO THE GLORY

There is a final thing to remember. The pathway of glory is the pathway of suffering. Look at Peter's letters, and you have three outstanding things. What are they? The Holy Spirit, suffering and glory. John xvii is just that. The pathway to the glory is suffering. "If ye are reproached for the name of Christ"—then you ought to be as miserable as possible?—no, "blessed are ye; because the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God resteth upon you" (I Peter iv. 14).

The Lord give us grace to keep our eyes on the positive side of all His dealings. It is our attitude toward His dealings that makes so much difference. There will be suffering—yes; but the attitude toward the suffering determines whether it is going to be shame or glory, darkness or light. Our attitude of faith toward our sufferings will let in the glory. That is a very practical matter with the Lord and for us. We are so often asking the Lord to change things, to deal with things which stand in the way of glory. If only the Lord would just deal with this and that, change it, move it out of the way, then we could glorify Him. It would be so much more to His glory if He did that.

The Lord says, 'No, not that way.' This glory is something very much more than being cheerful in happy circumstances. This glory is born out of the utmost depths of agony and suffering. This is real glory, which is much more than the glory of this world and the glory of favourable circumstances. The Lord says, 'You get into the place where there is glory in your sufferings and your adversities, and if I think it good, then I will change circumstances. I am waiting for you to climb on top: let the glory in, amidst your adversities, and then perhaps we will see about other things.'

That is very practical. We get down under our troubles and sufferings and begin to get depressed and to complain to the Lord; we want the Lord to do something about it. But we do not get anywhere along that line at all. Sooner or later the Lord comes and says, 'Real glory shows itself against a dark background: when the glory is there, whatever I see fit to do in the situation I will do; but first of all glorify Me in the fires.'

The Lord give us grace!

T. A-S.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

A GREAT WARFARE

STUDIES IN BUNYAN'S "HOLY WAR" III

IN our last study we gave a fairly detailed review of the strength of the enemy as it is revealed in Bunyan's book, the Word of God and our own experience. This we did because of the supreme importance of *spiritual intelligence* in this great conflict over Mansoul, and to magnify the surpassing greatness of the Power of God. Before we turn to a fuller consideration of *Heaven's supremacy*, of "Christ crucified . . . the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (I Cor. i. 23, 24), let us once again remind ourselves of the greatness of the issues at stake in this war.

The famous town of Mansoul lies between two contending empires. Built by the good King Shaddai for His own delight and as a gift to His Son, the town has fallen a prey to the insinuating usurper, Diabolus, whose governing motive in assaulting Mansoul is an unquenchable hatred of Shaddai and His Son. With the recovery of Mansoul, therefore, is bound up the satisfaction and vindication of Shaddai, the rightful inheritance of Emmanuel His Son, and the realisation of the purpose for which the town was built. Only as we come into an ever deeper understanding of these issues shall we be able to comprehend our own lives and experiences, and to 'suffer hardship . . . as good soldiers of Christ Jesus' (II Timothy ii. 3).

Now let us turn to a consideration of *Heaven's power*, as disclosed by Bunyan in this allegory.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

"The Lord is King for ever and ever" (Ps. x. 16).

The sovereignty of God is a mighty reality. He cannot fail! He cannot be outwitted. In the very nature of things He cannot lose the war. He is GOD; all things lie within His control. However much things may seem to have got out of hand in this world or in our lives, the Lord still in fact has everything in His hands. It is one of the 'good things' in this book that we are continually discovering the complete mastery the Lord has of the whole situation.

Heaven's power takes its rise, Bunyan discloses, in an eternal covenant between the Father and the Son. The destiny of Mansoul is secured, before the town has in fact been built. The enemy has been outmanœuvred even before he has appeared on the field of battle! Herein is the greatness of God, that

He has foreseen everything, provided for every eventuality beforehand, and has done so without touching the free-will of man, and in spite of the enemy. He could have destroyed Satan long ago, but He has chosen rather to let him do his worst and *thus* provide a background for His abounding grace and power. Here is an important key to the spiritual life. Why do the Lord's people suffer so much? Why is the enemy allowed to have things apparently so much his own way? Because the Lord is after *character* in His people, and character is only formed in the face of opposition (Rom. v. 3, 4). The enemy provides us with the opportunity of discovering the Lord, and as we discover Him we are changed into the same image. Further, Satan has raised an issue in the universe as to the worthiness of God, which God must and will answer. His answer is first in Christ and then in the Church. *We* are part of God's answer to His enemy. This explains much. (Eph. iii. 9-11).

The most glorious manifestation of the sovereignty of God is thus seen in His ability to transcend evil and to make it serve His own good purposes. Herein is the greatness of God—that, while He could so easily remove the opposition, He chooses rather to make it His servant! When the whole story is told it will be found that the Devil has been God's servant. Here indeed is a great mystery. But is not this the glory of the Cross? At the Cross the Devil did his worst against God, and *in so doing* cast himself out! Truly it takes a great general so to outmanœuvre his enemy that he is found fighting against himself! The fury and malice of the enemy at the Cross only provided the Lord with the ground required to cast him out, to redeem man from his terrible captivity, to recover and secure for ever His own purpose and inheritance, and to glorify His Name, that is, to establish for ever beyond question throughout the created universe His unutterable worthiness to be GOD alone. "The Lord alone shall be exalted in that day" (Isaiah ii. 11). May the Lord enlarge and encourage our hearts by a new sense of His power. The power of the enemy is so *terribly real* in these days. The Lord give us grace to lay hold of the fact that, as we abide within His sovereignty, the enemy has no power other than to serve us. How else can we explain Paul's words: "We . . . rejoice in our tribulations" (Romans v. 3);

and: "Our light affliction . . . worketh for us . . . an eternal weight of glory" (II Cor. iv. 17) ?

THE TRIUMPH OF THE CROSS

We have already indicated that the Cross is the supreme manifestation of the power of God. Now, in the background of the Holy War lies this absolute triumph of the Cross. Heaven marches on Mansoul out of this absolute victory. The infinite meaning of the Cross is Heaven's greatest weapon. From the beginning of the war until the end 'the Cross is in the field'. Indeed, the Cross was in Heaven before the war began, and long after it is all over the theme of Heaven's song will be: "Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain".

Bunyan puts it like this—

'The Son of Shaddai, having stricken hands with his Father, and promised that he would be his Servant to recover his Mansoul again, (before Mansoul had fallen) stood by his resolution, nor would he repent of the same. The purport of which agreement was this: to wit, that at a certain time, prefixed by both, the King's Son should take a journey into the Country of Universe, and there, in a way of justice and equity, by making amends for the follies of Mansoul, he should lay a foundation of her perfect deliverance from Diabolus and from his Tyranny.'

The Cross is to be found everywhere in Bunyan's history of the Great War. It is in virtue of that victory that Emmanuel casts Diabolus out of Mansoul. The emancipating power of the Cross is brought to bear upon the Mansoulans, the true inhabitants of the town. The destructive power of the Cross is brought to bear upon the Diabolonians, the allies of Diabolus within the town. The power of the Cross is *in* the town for its full recovery and development.

THE ENERGIES OF LIFE: THE NINE HEAVENLY CAPTAINS

As soon as the news of Mansoul's fall reaches the Court above, Heaven goes into action for the recovery of the town. Heaven's siege of Mansoul, Bunyan reveals, falls into two distinct phases, which culminate in the recapture of the town by Emmanuel. First the *Four Captains of Shaddai* take the field with their men; later *Emmanuel* takes the field in person, accompanied by His *Five Captains*. These heavenly captains surely set forth the *energies of Divine life*. We see these captains

first besieging the town and then taking up residence in it. When Heaven has conquered our hearts, Heaven takes up residence there.

(I) THE FOUR CAPTAINS OF SHADDAI

These four captains are described as 'very stout and rough-hewn men, men that were fit to break the ice, and to make their way by dint of Sword', and they describe themselves as 'the power and force of Shaddai'. Their names are Captain *Boanerges* (his Ensign was Mr. Thunder), Captain *Conviction*, Captain *Judgment*, and Captain *Execution*.

In the persons of these captains we see Heaven marching by way of *the Law*, and see the *energies of righteousness* besieging the town. These captains offer Mansoul conditions of peace: the Law proffers peace to those who keep it. They call, they command Mansoul to return to the way of righteousness. But Mansoul has *no ability* to respond. Well do we know that *the Law provides us with no ability* to live up to its righteous requirements. There is a fatal inability about us all, until Grace takes the field.

Now we must pause a moment to remind ourselves that "the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and righteous, and good" (Rom. vii. 12). There is nothing wrong with the Law; it is the expression of the nature of God. The trouble is with *us*—the trouble is *in us*. "The law . . . was weak through the flesh" (Rom. viii. 3). We are totally unable to answer to the Law. For this reason, in Christ we are "not under law, but under grace" (Rom. vi. 14). But let us be careful not to misunderstand this verse. The life "under grace" is not a lawless life. Far from it. We are not "under law" simply because the law is now *in us*. Through grace "the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in us" (Rom. viii. 4). The Law thunders at us from above and calls us to climb upward. But Grace comes to us where we are in all our weakness, gives us a new heart and causes us to walk in the way of righteousness (Ezek. xxxvi. 25 - 27). Grace lifts us upward.

So, the Four Captains were *unable* to recover the town. Their mission was an important one, of course. Theirs was a preparatory work. Their failure was not their fault. If only they had had 'but one substantial Friend in the Town'!—but alas, Mansoul was in the grip of a Tyrant. True, there was a mutiny in the town as a result of the activities of these Captains, but it was soon put down. My Lord Understanding and Mr. Conscience had been awakened and had made their voices heard in

the town, but they were soon clapped into prison. The Captains, therefore, could only appeal to Heaven for reinforcements, and for 'a Man to head them, that the Town may both love and fear.'

(II) THE FIVE CAPTAINS OF EMMANUEL

Emmanuel, the Golden Prince, now takes the field in person, accompanied by His five Captains and their men. The names of these captains were Captain *Credence*, Captain *Good-Hope*, Captain *Charity*, Captain *Innocent* and Captain *Patience*. These captains embody the *energies of grace*. Grace has now taken the field. Heaven is now marching by the way of Grace. Be it noted that the *Four Captains of Shaddai*, the *energies of righteousness*, are still taking part in the siege of the town, under Emmanuel. They are fighting alongside of the *Five Captains*, *Grace* and *Righteousness* fight together in this war. The holiness and the love of God always move together. But the immediate point is this—that, by the coming of Emmanuel and His captains, grace has provided for Mansoul an ability, a new basis of life, which the four captains could not provide. The coming of Emmanuel marks a great turning-point in the campaign. Grace has made the impossible possible!

(III) THE TOWN CAPTURED AND POSSESSED

So now we read of how the great battering-rams and slings of *The Word of God* were brought to bear upon the town; we see the *White Flag* planted upon Mount *Gracious* and the *Red Flag* upon Mount *Justice*, and also the *Black Flag* of defiance, but 'neither Mercy nor Judgment, nor Execution of Judgment, would or could come near to the heart of Mansoul'; we look on and listen while Emmanuel encounters Diabolus; we hear of Mr. *Loth-to-stoop's* ensnaring propositions, and of Diabolus' offer to set up a Ministry of Reformation in Mansoul with himself in charge as a Minister of Righteousness!

However, the time comes when Ear-Gate is broken open. At the command of Emmanuel, Captains Boanerges, Conviction and Judgment take possession of the House of Mr. Conscience, which was hard by the Castle; whilst Captain Execution is busy securing the back-streets, pursuing Lord Willbewill, and slaying such as old Mr. Prejudice. As yet the *Five Captains* have not entered the town; but *Good-Hope* and *Charity* are very much in evidence at *Eye-Gate*. Not until the *energies of righteousness*, set forth in the *Four Captains*, have done their work, do Emmanuel and His Captains reside in the town.

What lessons are here! *The breaking open of Ear-Gate!* What a need in all of us, even among the Lord's people! By nature we are all stone-deaf to the voice of the Lord. Then, the *energies of righteousness* breaking through to the House of *Conscience* and being quartered there! Surely it is true to say that the spurious or unsatisfactory conversions, and the superficial Christian living, which are such a feature of our day, are due, in part at any rate, to an altogether inadequate conception, in the Church and in her ministry, of the meaning of sin and righteousness. Emmanuel does not allow His grace to shine forth upon the town until it has been brought very low, until Conscience has felt the weight of the Law, until Lord Willbewill comes forth with a rope around his neck, and until the town has come to realise the appalling implications of its alliance with Satan. The Lord never heals lightly. He brings low before He raises up. He knows what is in man; He knows what is involved in saving a soul.

After the capture of the town, the casting out of the Tyrant and the bringing of Mansoul to a point of realisation and capitulation, Emmanuel's grace shines forth in pardon and the town is won completely to His allegiance. Captain *Credence*, the *spirit of faith*, then takes over the Castle from *Judgment* and *Execution*, and the town is 'delivered from the terrour of the first four Captains.' The way is now clear for Emmanuel to enter. The townsmen want His presence and the Castle has been prepared for Him by Captain *Credence*. It is through faith that Christ dwells in our hearts (Eph. iii. 17).

(IV) THE ENERGIES OF LIFE RESIDENT IN THE TOWN

When Emmanuel came to abide in the town, He brought with Him all nine Captains. When Christ comes in, Heaven itself comes into our hearts! We sometimes sing about 'full salvation' in these words—

"Life immortal, heaven descending,
Lo! my heart the Spirit's shrine".

The point is that, in the gift of His Son, God has given us all things. The infinite content of ETERNAL LIFE is ours in Christ. These heavenly Captains bring before us something of this content.

At first sight it may seem strange that all nine Captains should enter with Emmanuel. Surely the *first Four Captains* have no permanent place in Mansoul? Surely, now that the town is "under grace", the Law may retire from the scene? What need has Mansoul now of such ministry as theirs?

But here is Bunyan's wisdom. He sees that Grace and Righteousness must dwell together in the town, and whereas the Four Captains were formerly a terror to Mansoul in her rebellion, now, in her submission, they are welcomed as friends! Captain Boanerges and Captain Conviction, who had once so terrified Mr. Conscience, are now *invited* by him to take up their quarters in his house! The Lord Willbewill, who had not long before suffered so much at the hands of Captain Execution, now takes him and Captain Judgment to help him 'rule under the Prince for the good of the Town.' Perfect imagery! Righteousness is our friend and ally when we are on the right side! The Law of the Lord should be our delight. The Psalmist could say: "Oh how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day" (Ps. cxix. 97).

And so the *Energies of Righteousness* returned with Emmanuel. Boanerges would preach in the town as necessary. How much we need the Voice of Righteousness in our hearts! And the Captains were always on call and willing to lend their power against the lurking allies of Diabolus if they emerged from their dens. The righteousness of God is active and powerful like the light of the sun, and this righteousness is *in us*.

The *Five Captains* also, of course, dwell in the town. Captain *Innocent* stayed with Mr. *Reason*; Captain *Patience* with Mr. *Mind*; Captain *Charity* with Mr. *Affection*; and Captain *Good-Hope* with my Lord *Understanding*. How suggestive it all is! Captain *Credence* made his home in the *Castle*, where the *Lord Chief Secretary* also had His 'Lodgings.' And 'they two were very great one with another.'

These Captains express what Peter speaks of as "the grace of life" (I Pet. iii. 7). As the *four* speak to us of the righteousness of God, so the *five* represent the grace of God. Surely, Captain *Good-Hope* with his Standard-bearer, Mr. *Expectation*, point us to "the God of hope", who "begat us again unto a living hope" (I Pet. i. 3). What a wonderful thing is Hope! Hope is one of the abiding things (I Cor. xiii. 13). True Hope takes its rise in the nature of God, for God is always moving on in a way of increase and enlargement. "Of the increase of his government . . . there shall be no end" (Isaiah ix. 7). There is "no end" with God and His purpose. The end of this world-order only introduces a boundless future of unending and increasing glory. He is the God of Hope!

And Captain *Charity*, with his Standard-bearer, Mr. *Pitiful*: well, he is just saying, "God is love". There is a *heart* behind the universe. How important it is for us to lay hold of this, to grasp this.

God's purpose is a purpose of *love*, not some cold, mechanical conception. It is possible for us to see something of the purpose of God and to be standing for it, and yet at the same time to be out of heart-fellowship with God about it. "If I have not love, I am nothing" is Paul's drastic word.

And Captain *Innocent*, with his Standard-bearer, Mr. *Harmless*; what shall we say of them? Surely, here again we are confronted with yet another attribute of "the divine nature". There is something awe-ful about innocence, about guilelessness. We sometimes sense it in a little child, a wonderful transparency, a complete lack of duplicity. God is like this. It is written of the Lord Jesus that He was "guileless"; that He "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (Heb. vii. 26; I Pet. ii. 22). He walked in the power of a wonderful transparency, a wonderful innocence. This too is our calling in Him. May Captain *Innocent* have a fuller place in all our hearts.

And Captain *Patience*, with his Standard-bearer, Mr. *Suffer-Long*. We all know something of the long-suffering, the steadfast, persevering grace of God. He is the God of Patience. He patiently pursues His purpose, 'unresting, unhasting, and silent as light'. How deeply we need the *spirit of perseverance* in these days. Sometimes it seems as if we cannot go on a minute longer; we are sorely tempted to retire from the race. And how deeply we need its complement, the *spirit of forbearance*. How intolerant and unkind we are by nature; how lacking in sensitiveness. Truly, if the Lord dealt with us as we so often deal with one another, it would go ill with us all. "Love suffereth long, and is kind . . . Love beareth all things". Now, Christ is in us as the God of Patience.

And then there is the noble Captain *Credence* with his Standard-bearer, Mr. *Promise*. But is Faith an attribute of "the divine nature"? Well, what is Faith really? Is it not essentially the *spirit of confidence*? And is not confidence the very breath of Heaven? Is it not beautiful to observe the perfect mutual confidence which exists between the Father and the Son, as indicated, say, in the Gospel of John? Confidence binds together. Where there is no confidence there is disintegration. This is why the enemy is so set upon shaking our confidence in the Lord, and in one another. If we are not sure of the Lord, we shall never be able to "fight the good fight of the faith". If we are not sure of one another in the Lord, we shall never be able to fight together in this great warfare. How the enemy delights to see us fighting one another! The Lord show us our folly.

Now, these great Captains, these *energies of life*,

are *in us*. They have come in with Emmanuel. "He that hath *the Son*, hath *the life*" (I John v. 12). "Greater is he that is *in you* . . ." (I John iv. 4). But we must realise that these Captains did not come into Mansoul to oust the true inhabitants of the town. The fact that Christ is in us does not make us less than real people. God always deals with us as moral, responsible beings. The Mansoulians must play their part and work together with the Captains. The Christian life is a holy communion between the grace of God and us. While "*all things are of God*", we must receive, use and co-operate with "*the grace of life*".

THE WEAPONS OF LIFE

When Emmanuel went to war, He took with Him not only His Captains, but His Weapons, the weapons of life.

That great weapon of the Cross we have already considered a little. But there are also the great battering rams and golden slings, the Sword of Emmanuel and the Shield of Captain Credence, the Silver Armour of the Captains and the melodious Silver Trumpets. For the present we will think of two only of these weapons of life.

(I) EMMANUEL'S GOLDEN SLINGS

These *Slings* (and the battering rams) came from the Court and represent, of course, *the Word of God*. The TRUTH is a mighty weapon; the TRUTH liberates. "Thy word is truth." "I am the truth". First, the Slings are brought to bear upon the town. The Truth makes war upon Mansoul as it lies under the tyranny of the Liar. Later, the Slings are set up *in* the town for its protection. When Diabolus returns again, he is greeted by the Slings, and Bunyan comments: 'there is nothing to Diabolus so terrible as the well playing of Emmanuel's slings.' Now, Christ is The Word of God, and *as*

we bring HIM to bear upon the enemy, the enemy will flee. The fact is that Satan cannot stand up to Christ, and as we abide in Him, in His authority, in His victory, our enemy will have to give way to us. The Lord make us good slingers!

(II) EMMANUEL'S INVINCIBLE WEAPON OF WAR

'There was also an instrument, invented by Emmanuel, that was to throw stones from the castle of Mansoul, out at Mouth-gate; an instrument that could not be resisted, nor that would miss of execution. Wherefore, for the wonderful exploits that it did when used, it went without a name; and it was committed to the care of, and to be managed by, the brave captain, the Captain Credence, in case of War.'

Surely, this irresistible weapon can only signify *the utterance of faith*. True faith cannot be silent. What the heart believes the mouth will confess. Now this instrument, Bunyan says, was invented by Emmanuel. How He used it in the days of His flesh! Do we not recall His words in the wilderness of temptation, "It is written . . . it is written . . .", and His words at the tomb of Lazarus, "Father, I thank thee that thou heardest me . . . Lazarus, come forth" (John xi. 41, 43)? This is the utterance of faith, and it is *invincible*. 'From the Castle', we read—that is, from the heart, springing out of *heart-fellowship* with God; 'out at Mouth-gate'—that is, a faith which is *expressed* and *definite*. And it was 'managed by Captain Credence', *the spirit of faith*. May the Lord give us such a confidence in Himself in our hearts as will find a definite expression in relation to real needs and situations.

May the Lord, *our Rock*, teach *our* hands to war and *our* fingers to fight, and, though "wrestling . . . against principalities . . . powers . . . world-rulers . . . spiritual hosts of wickedness", give us to know Him inwardly as the GOD OF PEACE.

T. L. M.

from page 80.
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I HAVE LOVED THEE

Reading : Revelation iii, 7 - 11.

YOU will notice that the words of our title are linked with the Lord's coming—"I come quickly". And with His coming imminent He addresses these words to His children. The issue, after all, at the end, in the coming of the Lord, will be that there is that which draws out His own heart and makes it possible for Him to say this kind of thing—"I have loved thee." And that is a discriminating statement. We must place an emphasis upon the "thee" because that represents a certain condition that does answer to the heart of the Lord. The Lord loves *all* his children, but there seems to be something special here.

STRAITNESS AT THE TIME OF THE END

From this message to Philadelphia, which has the Lord's coming in view, we know how a faithful testimony may find itself at the time of the end. Undoubtedly the terms of this message indicate that the Lord's testimony will be in straitness, in limitation, hedged up, shut in. These words "key" and "door" surely indicate that there is something that is locked up, something that men would shut out, lock out, something men would hinder and frustrate and curtail and limit; doors that men would close and lock. Over against this, though it may be like that—and it will be like that to the end for a faithful testimony—the Lord says: 'I have the key. And no matter what doors men may close, I can set before you a door which no one can close. Keys and doors ultimately are with Me, in the presence of the severest straitening, curtailment and difficulty'.

THE TRUE TESTIMONY AND THE FALSE

And then we have this word which says there are those who "say they are Jews, and they are not", but are "of the synagogue of Satan", implying that there is something which seeks to simulate and represent what is of God, but which is not true and not pure. That is why the Lord introduces Himself as the One that is holy and the One that is true, in contrast to that which is false and impure, which is not transparent, which will not stand up to the scrutiny of those eyes of flame, with which He is presented to us at the beginning of these messages to the churches. He is looking

through and exposing the false. But a true testimony will find it is based upon something that is true, as over against the seeming true which is false, savouring of that which is a lie—a synagogue of Satan, a legalistic system in antagonism to a pure, clear, full, free testimony of the Lord Jesus. That is how it may be in any expression in fullness of the Lord's mind towards the end. It is not going to be popular and have all the doors open in all directions, with everyone acclaiming and sponsoring. It is going to feel very much shut out and find many doors closed. 'Never mind', says the Lord; 'I know, I have the key. The issue is with Me'.

THE DIVINE APPROBATION OF FAITHFULNESS

But what is it that brings out this divine approbation? 'I am going to make them know that I have loved thee'. There is a partiality of God—not just for persons, for people, as such; it is not a selectiveness among people which draws out His partiality. But there is a partiality of the Lord towards faithfulness itself. It is that which draws out this word, "I have loved thee". I am sure it must have been very heartening to the saints at Philadelphia to get a message like that. It must almost have startled them in their difficulties, in everything that seemed to say that the Lord was not with them and was not prospering them. There is so much that is against them; there are so many difficulties. Then suddenly a letter arrives, and in it the Lord says: "I have loved thee". Almost startling! Why? Here are the oppressed saints at Philadelphia, and the Lord says, "thou hast a little power". They themselves are more conscious of weakness than of power, seeming to be very much weaker than otherwise, and yet there is that there which speaks of the Lord, something that the Lord can light upon and say: 'In all your consciousness of weakness, in the seeming overwhelming insufficiency, there is that there which is My foothold, which speaks of Me'. "Thou hast a little power, and didst keep my word"—'you have been faithful to My revealed thoughts and mind',—"and didst not deny my name"—the Name of absolute supremacy and honour and glory—, and "didst keep the word of my patience".

"THE WORD OF MY PATIENCE"

"The word of my patience". A strange phrase. What does it mean? Surely just this—that, all

down the ages, God spoke a word to His servants, gave them something from Himself, and then it seemed He went away and left them, and they had to wait and wait and wait. They were tested by the word, having to pass through a long period of waiting for the word to be fulfilled, for God to honour His word. "The word of the Lord tried him", it says about Joseph (Ps. cv. 19). He evidently had something from the Lord at some time, and now he is in a dungeon. His soul enters into iron. "The word of the Lord tried him". Here in Philadelphia they had the word, and had not given it up; they had held on through difficulties, through the darkness, till the word should be fulfilled. "Kept the word of my patience." Upon all that the Lord comes back and says: "I have loved thee".

We see a grand illustration and embodiment of all this in Daniel—the man who was so conscious of his own weakness, who had to be helped up on to his feet by stages, first to his knees and then to his feet, so conscious was he of his weakness (Dan. x. 8-11). "O man greatly beloved" (vs. 19). His strength was in God and not in himself. Daniel was one who 'kept the word' of the Lord. We recall how he came to know "by the books"—he had read Jeremiah, he had the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah—that 70 years should pass over Israel in captivity, and then they should be restored. Seventy years is a long time. He had discovered the word of the Lord and he did not let it go. He kept the word through all that time in Babylon; he held the word—the Lord had said it.

And if ever a man had 'not denied His Name' it was Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar was a great name in Babylon, and every thing is now between the Name of Jehovah and the name of Nebuchadnezzar. And he did not deny His Name. He and his brethren held to the Name of "the God of heaven", Jehovah.

And as for the 'word of His patience', well, it

was a long-drawn-out business for Daniel and his brethren. He was an old man when these later scenes of his prophecies were enacted. All the time his patience is being tested. If this happens or that happens, what about the Lord? And how many things could have happened! The fire could have devoured, the lions could have destroyed. The word of the Lord—where is it? Knowing God, neither fire, lions, nor anything else can upset that word. It is going to be fulfilled. "O man greatly beloved". "I have loved thee". Oh the faithfulness of Daniel in all these ways. He held on to His word.

It is so easy to say, 'Well, you see, everything has gone to pieces, and there is no hope now for a real testimony. I will make the best of things as they are. Jettison Ephesians, jettison Colossians. It may have been all right at one time, but give it all up now.' "Thou hast kept my word". Still holding on, if only it be in a remnant, a small representation of the whole, to see something that answers to the word of the Lord. Still holding on to the absolute supremacy of His Name over every other name, cost what it will and may. Still enduring many difficulties, many frustrations, knowing many closed doors and all that, and yet the word of His patience kept. 'The Lord is going to fulfil His word—He is going to fulfil His word sooner or later'.

That is faith, and that is the ground. It is a simple word, but that is how we may find things. The Lord is coming soon, and He wants to find, even if in a small way so far as numbers are concerned, a faithful people like that. He wants to be able to say, 'Your vindication will come', and the greatest vindication that you could ever desire or hope for is that He should say through it all, "I have loved thee". Do you want more than that? None of us wants more than that the Lord should say, "I have loved thee", "O . . . greatly beloved".

T. A-S.

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

FREE FROM THE LAW

JANE was a little girl who lived in London, and on most days you would have said that she was very much the same as other little girls of her own age. If you had met her in the street you might have passed her by without a second glance—that is, on *most* days. But there was one day when she was acting very strangely, so strangely that you

could not have helped stopping to watch her, and no doubt your eyes would have opened wider and wider to see her funny antics as she made her way along the road. Let me try to tell you how she went.

At first she seemed in a great hurry, for she rushed forward in a series of hops. All of a sudden

she paused, thought for a moment, and then with great care she took two slow steps forward, first with the right foot and then with the left. She did this again, then changed her step and took a long stride, this time with the left foot first. After this she did a few more hops, and then, there she stood, balancing on her toes and looking as though she were on the edge of a cliff and in danger of falling over. By a very special effort she kept her balance, and so went jerkily on. It was all most serious, as you could see by the frown of care on her face. At times she had clearly taken a wrong step, for she shook her head as though angry with herself, went back a pace, and then tried the step once more.

It all seemed very strange. Yet anybody who has ever been a little girl (or a little boy for that matter) ought to have guessed what she was doing. She was playing a game. Now the game is this: you have to step only in the middle of the paving stones, and never on the lines between. If you do make a mistake and tread on the lines, then you have to go back and take that step all over again. Jane loved this game, and was trying hard to do it properly. It is not so easy as you might think, this keeping the rule never to step on the pavement lines. Sometimes, of course, Jane found it quite easy, and could forge ahead, but at other times it was harder, and she found that she had to go more slowly and give all her mind to taking a very careful step. At times it was so hard that she almost fell over in her care not to touch the line with her foot. Every now and again it proved quite impossible; she broke the rule and so had to go back and try again.

There are people who try to live the Christian life just as Jane was trying to walk along the road. For them the lines in the pavements are the commandments: "Thou shalt not . . . Thou shalt not . . ." The spaces on the paving stones are like the rules which they must keep, the laws which say, 'You must do this—and this—and this!' Sometimes such people take great strides forward, and all seems well; sometimes they linger and struggle in a great effort not to tread where they should not; and sometimes they just cannot help breaking the rules. This is a very hard way of trying to do what is right and to please God. It is a very unhappy one, too, because of the many failures. If the Christian life meant always trying to keep the rules and laws, we should soon find that, try as we might, we were not able to live it.

It seemed a pity that Jane was looking down

all the time, watching so carefully to avoid treading on the lines. She had no chance to look around or to enjoy anything else; all her attention was fixed on the one matter of putting her feet just where they should go. Yet with all her care she could not help making mistakes. The New Testament often speaks of those who try to please God by "the works of the law", and makes it very clear that this cannot be done. We can never become Christians or walk in the ways of the Lord by our own efforts to obey a lot of rules. Just as Jane found it impossible to avoid treading on the lines, so shall we find that we cannot please God, however hard we try. We must remember, too, that in our case we cannot go back and take a step again; we can only go on with all our faults.

I wish that you could have seen Jane a few days later, as she walked along the very same street. She looked quite a different little girl. Now she was free from all care; she did not make any sudden stops, nor did she need to go back to take any steps over again. Her hand was firmly clasped in the hand of her father, and as she gaily chatted away to him, she looked up into his smiling face, quite forgetful of those lines on the pavement. She was not now trying to keep any rules, or to balance herself on the edge of any gaps. She was walking hand in hand with her father, going happily on her way without a care in the world.

This, surely, shows us the true Christian way of life. It is a matter of personal trust in the Lord Jesus, and of walking close to Him. Like Jane, we must look upward to the Lord, and not walk with our eyes fixed on the ground, watching for all the laws and rules—'Thou shalt' and 'Thou shalt not', and so on. There are no rules which can make us Christians, and we could not keep them if there were. But there is a living Saviour, who will walk with us in the way, and lead us into all the will of God.

What sort of a Christian are you? The one who is trying not to tread on the lines, seeking to be right by your own efforts to be good, and often having to confess that you have failed? Or the true Christian, who has yielded his life to the One who died on the Cross, and is trusting only in His saving power? You, too, can walk hand in hand with the Saviour, for He has said: "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isaiah 41. 10).

H. F.

WE BEHELD HIS GLORY

(CHAPTER IV OF VOL. II)

THE TROUBLED HEART

Reading : John xiv.

IT is important, for obtaining the full value of the content of this chapter, that we recognise that the opening words throw back to and link up with what has preceded. Really, the narrative ought not to be broken into at this point. The link should be with verses 33 - 35 of chapter xiii. There the Lord had said some most disturbing things, especially disturbing to men who had such a different 'Messianic' mentality as to the "Kingdom". He said: 'Little children, I am with you for only a little while longer. You will look for me and I shall be gone. Moreover, for the time being, you will not be able to come where I am.'

Then, to Simon Peter's protestation, He spoke of the terrible breakdown which would so soon overshadow all Peter's self-confidence. Surely both of these things called for some words of reassurance that this was not the end of everything. How unstable and insecure everything seemed to be! The ground beneath their feet was giving way like quicksand. There was good reason for their hearts to be troubled. And then—straight on without a break—"Let not your heart be troubled", followed by the statement that there are "abiding-places" in the Father's House. The emphasis is upon "abiding". These words of Christ are commonly regarded as relating to the more or less distant future when He shall 'come again and receive us unto Himself, that where He is, there we may be also.' That is undoubtedly true, and has in it the comfort which He intended it to have. But is that the whole truth? Is this not in keeping with the whole *spiritual* teaching of John's Gospel? We have seen in every chapter that Jesus was speaking and acting on spiritual principles, and while we do not desire to spiritualise practical or temporal values out of existence, it is difficult to conclude that this section is essentially different from all that precedes and follows. Hence, we are bound to make room here for all that really *did* happen afterward and that has obtained during the many centuries since these words were spoken.

Indeed, this Gospel of John is all of one piece, and what we call chapter xiv is but the enlargement of the principle, introduced with the feet-washing as a symbolic setting, in the words: ". . .

his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father".

"In my Father's house are many abiding-places".

So what is introduced here is—

I. CHRIST IN HEAVEN

The grand and all-governing feature of this dispensation is that Christ is in Heaven.

All the purposes and activities of God in this dispensation are related to that fact.

All government is vested in Christ in Heaven. The headquarters of the Church are in Heaven—it *has none on earth*; neither in Jerusalem, Rome, nor anywhere else. There can be no centre or centralising of God's work in any earthly place. Everything has to be referred to Heaven, and derived from Heaven.

The world is the place of *man's* glory; Heaven is the place of *Christ's* glory. The earth is the place of Christ's emptying; Heaven that of His filling. The earth sees His humiliation; Heaven sees His exaltation. The earth is the scene of His journeys with no place to lay His head. Heaven sees Him entered into His rest: He "*sat down* at the right hand of the Majesty on high". The earth is the realm of Satan's kingdom, Judas being the link (xiii. 2): Heaven is the place of Christ's throne, from which He *overrules* Satan's kingdom.

And so the comparisons and contrasts can go on, but the inclusive truth is that in Christ in Heaven everything is centred for the believer's and the Church's life, rest, power, direction, government, confidence, and fulness.

That is the explanation of everything in the Book of the Acts from chapter ii and onward.

But it leads to the counterpart of that, namely—

II. THE CHURCH IN HEAVEN

In this chapter everything is future. "In that day" is a phrase which stands over a long section of several chapters. So we see that the Church (everything now being corporate) is not at this point in Heaven, but the day is seen when it will be. John, in the Revelation, sees it there literally at last, but between the position in his Gospel and

that at the end of the Revelation all of Paul's ministry has its place. Whatever may be either literal or symbolical, it is all based upon what is spiritual. For instance, 'going to Heaven' requires spiritual, heavenly birth, citizenship, life, nature, walk, and conformity. Paul it is who brings in this counterpart, but the Holy Spirit is one in both and they are complementary.

The explanation of John's recorded words of Christ about the Father's House and the "abiding (or resting) places" is found in Paul's words in his Ephesian letter: "quickened . . . raised . . . seated us together with him in the heavenly places". We are regarded as being there *now*. The "that day" has come. It is the "day" after the Cross, Resurrection, Ascension, and the Spirit's descent. This is the full result of what we have seen as to chapter xiii.

ENLIGHTENMENT AS TO THE WAY

Jesus said: "Ye know the way." They said: "We know not the way." But Jesus had only just said: "Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow afterwards" (xiii. 36). This all seems very confusing. Jesus must have been speaking mysteriously, parabolically! He must have been labouring under a definite handicap, some real disadvantage, because of a basic deficiency in them. There are therefore two things to note here.

"Flesh and blood *cannot* inherit the kingdom of heaven", "Thou canst not follow . . . now".

And "Ye know"—"Thou shalt . . ."

Upon what did their knowing rest initially? It rested upon their having come into touch with Him! "I am the way". But this knowledge is shown to be twofold.

1. Personal association with Christ. Present.

2. The Holy Spirit's *inward* revelation of Christ. Progressive.

John's whole Gospel is based upon, or composed of, personal and actual contact with Christ, and an upshot from that. That upshot is that He is acknowledged to be the Son of the Living God. "Thou art the Christ . . ."

Paul's ministry is based upon: "It pleased God . . . to reveal his Son *in me*." "Christ *in you*".

But the experience and teaching of both John and Paul are based upon a common foundation: the 'cannot' of the flesh, the "natural man"; the need to become "spiritual" men, i.e. men of the Spirit; and between these the experience of the Cross. On one side the Cross says 'No!', on the other side it says 'Yes!' "Thou canst not"—"Thou shalt". How true that was proved to be of

the self-confident, self-assured, self-sufficient Simon Peter of xiii, 37!—but, on the other side of the Cross, how true was the "Thou shalt", the great 'afterward'. That selfhood was Satan's ground, and it had to be broken. Peter, the restless, feverish, troubled, variable, fretful, questioning, disputing, impulsive, and denying, was emptied out by the Cross. Subsequently, as under the mastery of the Spirit, he entered into heavenly rest, assurance, certainty, persistence, and courage. He followed through, and whatever the Father's House meant for him ultimately, he came, in *this* life, to the place of 'abiding'; to the spiritual meaning of that House. This is abundantly clear from his letters.

Peter's own abiding resulted from Christ coming to abide in him, to go no more away: "with you for ever" (xiv. 16). This will be more fully considered in the next two chapters.

This is the ground and assurance of "peace" (27). If we are entangled with ourselves, we have no peace. If we are entangled with the world, we have no peace. Only the disentangled can have peace; and death with Christ does the disentangling, and resurrection with Christ leads to a life *above* the world and above ourselves.

This chapter, John xiv, really gathers around one word—a Greek word denoting: to stay, remain, abide, continue, endure, be permanent. It occurs in verse 2—"abiding-places"; verse 10—"the Father *abiding* in me"; verse 17—the Holy Spirit will *abide* in them; verse 23—the Godhead: "we will make our *abode* with" believers.

This stands over against—

The treachery of Judas; the shadow of the Cross; the imminent departure of Christ; the inability to follow Him; the questions arising—"How?"

It is an amazing thing to realise that all this perplexity, uncertainty, bafflement, apprehension, is the doorway to the greatest rest: the rest of knowing, of certainty, of finality. This is indicated as being all bound up with a *spiritual* union with Christ in Heaven—stronger, deeper, and more abiding than any earthly, temporal, physical, sentient association could ever be. Those who know Him after the Spirit know how superior this knowledge is to any other kind of knowing, for by it their hearts have become untroubled as to eventualities; they are at rest.

There are *heart* troubles and *heart* cries here. Jesus has undercut all self-confidence and assurance as to a man's ability to go through a severe test of faithfulness. He has practically undercut men's confidence in an earthly relationship with

Himself. He has raised the tremendous question and mystery of the life beyond this: Where? How? What? What is the answer? How can we come to absolute rest and assurance? The inclusive answer is: "I am".

Really to know Him as He can be known after the Resurrection answers all questions, settles all doubts, and silences all troubles as to ourselves, our way, and our end.

T. A-S.

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to page 74.

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**A WITNESS
AND
A TESTIMONY**

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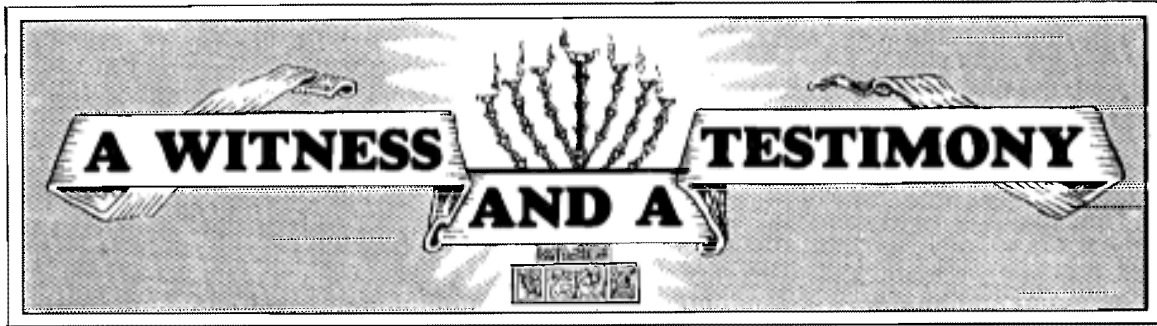
THIS MINISTRY

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

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

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

'Personal' letters should be addressed to Mr. T. AUSTIN-SPARKS.



JULY — AUGUST, 1954.

Vol. 32. No. 4.

THE RECOVERING OF THE LORD'S TESTIMONY IN FULNESS

VI. THE WORK AND THE WORKERS

WHEN the writer of the letter to the Hebrews had been saying many things, he evidently had a feeling that it all needed to be gathered up into one clear, precise statement, and so he wrote: "Now in the things which we are saying the chief point is this". The margin says, "Now to sum up what we are saying . . ." (Heb. viii. 1). Such a need is present with us at this point, so let us try to collect and to focus what we have been saying thus far.

DIVINE REACTIONS

The history of God's work is the history of movements and counter-movements, of action and reaction, of incline and decline, of advance and arrest or reverse. In one of the earliest books that we published, these words occurred at the commencement, 'There are two things which it is very important that we should have clearly before us. These two things, as we put them, may seem to contradict one another or to be paradoxical. One is that all the way through the ages God has constantly done a new thing. The other is that what has always been God's new thing from man's standpoint, has not been new from His own.'

And then we went on to point out that God always begins from completeness. He has everything in Himself fully and finally before He makes a beginning, and all His subsequent activities are really working backward to fulness, although to man they appear to be the new things of God. The course, then, has been that God begins with fulness. Man falls away and loses that fulness. Then

God reacts and steadily moves in progressive and gradual recovery of that fulness.

And every fresh movement of God is marked by two features.

In the first place, intrinsic fulness; that is, although it may be for the moment a partial thing only, it has intrinsic values in it. It is something which has all the potentialities of the whole, because everything that God does, however small it may be at the moment, has all His mind in it and behind it. God is not just occupied with fragments as though they were the whole, but with parts in which the whole is potentially included.

And then, in the second place, His movements are always an advance upon those which preceded them. That is, every movement of God sees an addition to what He has done before. Although He may have taken these steps from time to time in the way of recovery, it has been progressive, and now the next step will represent something added, something more, a stage further on in His work of recovering the original fulness. I hope that is clear. It is very important to get that background and that foundation.

Then we find that there are some inclusive or major factors in these movements of God—what we have called, in the title of the volume just quoted from, *The Divine Reactions*. One of those major factors is *an instrument raised up by God in sovereignty*, with God's vision and God's passion; an instrument raised up by God in sovereignty—which means that this is an act of God, and, being a sovereign act, may have nothing at all to account for it from any other standpoint. It

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is not that the instrument is one which all observers would say was the right instrument; not that the man or the vessel is such as would win the approval of the world's mind. God acts sovereignly, and very often in these reactions He has chosen instruments which, both in their own judgment and in that of others, were not the ones to have been chosen. They themselves were very conscious of their own lack of qualification for their calling, and very often other people had the same kind of thought about them—that they could do better, that they were not doing what was expected of them and in the way in which they should do it. But God sovereignly chose them, in His own wisdom, and stood by them, and proved that this was of Himself.

A VESSEL MARKED BY VISION
AND PASSION

But such a vessel, be it personal or be it collective, has always been in possession of God's vision. Such an instrument had seen the Lord, seen the mind of God, seen the purpose of God, become captured and captivated by that thing which God had purposed from eternity, and seen it in very much greater fulness than others: not only seeing, being in principle a 'seer' of the mind and will and purpose of God, but also being mastered by the passion of God for it, brought into what we have earlier in these meditations called the travail of God unto His end. These are major factors in all Divine movements. Every fresh step that God has taken has been marked by these two things. Let it be recognised, because it explains so much.

THE PECULIAR TREATMENT OF
THE VESSEL

Then this vessel, that has seen the purpose of God—this calling, this "great work" embodied in any present movement of God—has its own very peculiar history under God's hand. It is something to take very careful note of, that God deals with such an instrument as He deals with no other. He deals with that instrument—again I say, it may be personal or it may be a collective body, a company—God deals with that instrument called for this specific end of His in a peculiar, a strange way. He deals with it differently from all His dealings with other people and other things; it is never safe for any called into the full purpose of God to judge the dealings of God with them alongside of His dealings with other people. That will always be dangerous. His ways with such a work

and such an instrument are His own peculiar ways, and therefore vessels for this purpose, instruments to this end, have their own peculiar perils. They become involved in peculiar conflict, strange pressure, strange happenings, strange ways of God. God is dealing with them in relation to specific purposes.

Now, the book of Nehemiah, with which we have been occupied, the last book of Old Testament history, is an inspiring and instructive representation of all that we have just said. We have said that the natural divisions of that book are in relation, firstly to the wall, the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem, secondly to the work and the workers, and thirdly to the involved warfare. We have spent most of our time so far with the wall. Let me quickly go over that ground again, perhaps in a slightly different way from the way we have have so far taken.

THE WALL OF JERUSALEM A FIGURE OF
CHRIST

What is the wall? The wall of Jerusalem is a figure of Christ—first of all in the sight of Heaven, in the light of Heaven, in the eyes of Heaven; how Christ is from Heaven's standpoint. That is always the starting-point of any appraisal or judgment. The wall is also a figure of Christ as presented to the world, and then as presented to the kingdom of Satan, the hostile forces. It is Christ in those three outward senses—toward Heaven, toward the world, toward the forces of evil. They are all very interested in this wall. You can see that in the book of Nehemiah.

Heaven is very interested in this wall. That is where we begin. God acts, and it is a grand thing when the wall is finished. And all those hostile forces were so angry that Nehemiah was able to say—and they were compelled to admit—that this work was of God. God was interested, Heaven was interested; it was something in the light of Heaven. Then, as to the world, the wall had its own testimony, its own declaration; we will not stop with that for the moment. So far as the kingdom of Satan was concerned, it is very clear that that kingdom was intensely interested. We shall probably occupy ourselves later almost entirely with that aspect, when we come to the warfare.

But then there was a fourth aspect, namely, what the wall means to the Lord's own people: in other words, what Christ means to the people of God as a great, inclusive, defensive stronghold, and in the glorious impartation of His excellences and perfections to His own people. The last men-

tion of walls in the Bible is of a wall of magnificence, a wall of gems. It is the perfections, the glories, of Christ, and the people of God in the godd thereof before God.

So, then, the wall is a figure of Christ in this fourfold aspect.

Going back, you remember that Abraham, or Abram, as he was then, was separated from Babylon and Chaldea and all that that meant, and we are told that he 'looked for the city which had the foundations' (Hebrews xi. 10)—the type of that heavenly city, that new Jerusalem, which eventually, in its completion, will 'come down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God' (Rev. xxi. 2). Abraham's vision of a city was the type of that heavenly Jerusalem. These two cities, Babylon and Jerusalem, have always been in conflict. When the Lord's people declined from His glorious conceptions and intentions concerning Jerusalem, the only alternative for them was Babylon—the false thing from which God had called them out in their very father, Abraham. They were going back into that from which they had been separated in Abraham. As we have pointed out, the Lord let them have a taste of that, and for many of them the taste was too much. They were glad to get back to Jerusalem at any cost, however Jerusalem might be at the time.

Now, when the Lord Jesus came, He did two things. He repudiated the world, as represented by Babylon, the false kingdom, and He repudiated the earthly Jerusalem, because it no longer expressed the Divine thought; and He gathered into Himself all those Divine thoughts as to what the city was meant to be. He not only personally took the place of the temple, but He took the place of Jerusalem, in a spiritual way. He was and is the embodiment of all God's thoughts about this city, as encompassed and delineated by the wall. So that if we enquire into what this wall means and what this city means, we shall not be merely studying a theme, or some object; we shall be called to contemplate the Lord Jesus.

It is very important that we should forget our illustrations sometimes, get behind our types and our figures, and look straight at that which they represent—shall I say, straight at Him whom they represent. A critic of Francis Thompson, the poet who wrote *The Hound of Heaven*, said that you could not see his landscape for his churning sea of metaphor. And sometimes our typology veils, hides, obscures, that which is typified. I hope that when we speak of the wall and of Nehemiah we are not going to fall into that snare, but that our eyes will all the time be seeing through Nehemiah,

through the wall, to Him who is the One really in view.

THE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN NEHEMIAH AND THE BOOK OF THE ACTS

Well, we have to move on still further, because God did recover His testimony in fulness on the day of Pentecost. It is helpful to see how there is a correspondence between the book of Nehemiah and the book of the Acts of the Apostles. The testimony is raised again in fulness; the testimony of the Lord, "the testimony of Jesus", came into completeness and fulness on the day of Pentecost, and all the features of the book of Nehemiah are found in the book of the Acts, especially in the first chapters. We shall look at that more closely in a moment. I mention it because it may be helpful to you, in reading the book of Nehemiah, not just to read it as a book of history, or even as the last historical book of the Old Testament, but to read it with the book of the Acts before you all the time, and just see how these two books correspond all the way through.

But what I want to say here, before going further with that, is this: that, although the Lord, on the day of Pentecost, recovered His testimony in greater fulness than ever before (except for His original intention, which was in His view before all things), it was not very long before the counteraction set in again, the decline. Before we are through our New Testament we are beginning to see gaps in the wall, weaknesses in the testimony. We can indeed go much further than that, for when we read the first letter to the Corinthians, and see all the rubbish there, we would say that the testimony seems to have been almost completely destroyed. What rubbish is revealed in that first letter to the Corinthians! what a state of wreckage and breakdown! And when we come to the end of the New Testament letters and take up the book of the Revelation, with its messages to the seven churches in Asia, we have undoubtedly a yet further picture of a broken wall: the testimony is disrupted again, there is nothing whole. "I have found no works of thine fulfilled" (Rev. iii. 2). The testimony is broken, there are big gaps in it, and that is its state as the New Testament closes.

Since then, not once nor twice, but many times, God has acted again to bring back bit by bit His original purpose and testimony. I am not going through the history of those past centuries. You meet the testimony in various forms, but you know that God has not given it up, God has not abandoned it; God has come back, and He has come

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back again, seeking to recover now this, now that, now something else; ever moving towards the original fulness, to have it in completeness. Thank God that to-day there is very much more of His testimony than there was in the Dark Ages. To-day many of the great things of the New Testament are established in the Church. They are great factors. It is not necessary for me to mention them, but God has moved on steadily with His remnants, ever bringing something back.

The point with which we are concerned is this. Is He not at this very time in need of further recovery, and giving Himself to it? and might it be, in His sovereignty and in His grace, that we are related to the present movement of God in recovering the wall in fulness and in completeness? It may not be ours to build it, it may not be given to us to make it full; but it may be our calling to add something, to do something toward this matter of finishing the testimony of Jesus; and if this time corresponds to the book and work of Nehemiah, that is, the end of the dispensation, we may feel that we are in the last stages and the last phases of the testimony of Jesus. We are, indeed, not without some reason for thinking that that is so.

Now let us come back and look more closely at this matter of the correspondence between Nehemiah and the book of the Acts, for we shall now be engaged not so much with the wall as with the work and the workers.

A MOVEMENT FROM HEAVEN

In the first place, as you take up both of these books, Nehemiah and Acts, you become aware of the fact that there is a movement from Heaven, that the brooding, all-pervading Spirit of God is on the move. In the book of Nehemiah, it has commenced there in Babylon. The Spirit of God has started to move. First of all, He stirs up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia to make that facilitating decree and provision. There is a movement from Heaven. And then it has moved into the heart of this man Nehemiah, and has created this deep concern and unrest, this discontent with things as they are. The Spirit of God is on the move. And then, by the facilitation, Nehemiah comes to Jerusalem, and the spirit that is in him, that urge that is in him, spreads—first to some brethren and then, with very few exceptions, to all the people. It is said of some that they “put not their necks to the work” (Neh. iii. 5), but they are the exceptions. The Spirit is on the move, creating first of all this dissatisfaction with things as they are, this unrest about the situation, this sense that things ought to

be different. It is not, as I have said earlier, just a spirit of grumbling and of criticism; it is a work of the Spirit. It is positive, not negative; it is constructive in its object and not destructive. The Spirit of God is on the move again, as He was in the first earthly creation, brooding and moving to bring order out of chaos. Here it is again in the beginning of this book of Nehemiah.

You pass to the book of the Acts, and you know only too well that Heaven is on the move, the Spirit is on the move. Something is happening: the long night seems to be passing, streaks of light are shooting across the horizon, there is a sense of awakening and movement; and on that great day the thing breaks—Heaven is cleft, the Spirit descends, and the Spirit's movement begins. It begins with a nucleus, but then through the nucleus the Spirit moves out and lays hold of others and brings them into the one vision and the one passion of the heart of God. In Nehemiah we have it put this way: “for the people had a mind to work” (Neh. iv. 6). But now look at the book of the Acts and see these very people! That is the only way in which you can describe those early chapters: “the people had a mind to work”.

THE GOVERNING MOTIVE OF
THE FULL TESTIMONY OF THE LORD

The purpose—the full, complete testimony of the Lord—is common to Nehemiah and to the book of the Acts. We could dwell with that, but I think it is only too obvious, from those early chapters, that those early proclamations, that early preaching of the Church and the apostles and the evangelists, was a testimony to the absolute supremacy, fulness, completeness, sufficiency and finality of Christ. It was to that, in figure and type, that Nehemiah and the people were committed in their day.

But let this thing take hold of us. Let us not be thinking back centuries, but bring this right into our own present. Are we people with a mind that there shall be a full, unlimited and unbroken testimony of the Lord—people dominated by God's purpose and moved with God's passion? Are we?

THE GOVERNMENT OF CHRIST AS LORD

Now let us look at some of the factors involved. Firstly, it is a very impressive thing how everybody submitted to Nehemiah. That is saying more than you realise unless you have read very carefully the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. If you read the book

of Ezra, you will find that there were a good many recalcitrant people and rulers and priests, who had their own mind about things and their own will and their own way. They were just not going to have Ezra, and his ideas. There is a good deal of the personal and the selfish coming out and asserting itself.—But when you come to Nehemiah, that is all gone. When this man comes in, everybody seems to give him his place, everybody seems to recognise that he is the man: they all do as they are told, they fall in—he can do what he likes with them. You see, some of these rulers have bought the people's property and land: they have enriched themselves at the expense of the people, and the poor people are in a grievous state because of them. And Nehemiah says, 'Now then, you give it all back, every bit of it; you refund every penny!' You put that suggestion to any man of the world and see what you get! But these people do it: it seems that it does not matter what Nehemiah requires or demands—they do it.

Come over to the book of Acts. Here all recognise that Jesus is Lord and subject themselves to Him. There is only just the one rebellious element, in Ananias and Sapphira; but it did not pay them to break the régime of Christ's lordship—it broke them. But for the rest, everything went—properties, lands, money, themselves, everything—all came into wonderful subjection to the Lord Jesus; and you will never get anywhere with His full testimony until He takes pre-eminence and precedence over all life and ail that life contains.

There is a corresponding factor which is perfectly clear. The people, the priests, the rulers, all gave Nehemiah the place of headship. In this other movement of God, everybody gave Jesus Christ His place as Head. He was indeed not only preached as Lord, but was yielded to as Lord with everything.

A MASTER PASSION FOR THE TESTIMONY

And then another thing common to these two books is how the testimony mastered everything and everybody. It was not only Nehemiah, but the thing for which Nehemiah stood. This is seen in two respects.

Firstly, the wall: how the wall became the dominating object and interest of everybody. If the wall is a type or figure of the testimony of the Lord Jesus, it just means that the testimony of the Lord Jesus in fulness became the master-concern of everybody. They had nothing else, for the time being, for which to live, but His testimony. The wall overshadowed everything and everybody. And

so it was in the first days of this dispensation. The testimony of Jesus so overshadowed everything else that they lived for its furtherance. They just lived and thought and planned and dreamed of the furtherance of this testimony.

THE VOICE OF THE SPIRIT

But then you notice that there was another factor in Nehemiah. It was the trumpet. The man who had the trumpet was stationed by Nehemiah, and you remember the words: "In what place soever ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us" (Neh. iv. 20). The trumpet was in charge. What is the trumpet? I think that the trumpets of the Old Testament are always types of the voice of the Holy Spirit; in other words, "what the Spirit saith unto the churches". It was by the sound of the trumpet that Israel moved through the wilderness. Whenever they were to move, the trumpet sounded. In figure, they moved by and in the Spirit, under the government of the Spirit.

That is, of course, too obvious in the book of the Acts—the government of the voice of the Spirit. We cannot too strongly stress that. Perhaps I am in peril of trying to crowd too much in, without giving due consideration to every point. But do give heed to this. I am saying a very terrible thing now, but I am perfectly aware of what I am saying. I have tested it well over a wide area of this world. *There are very few Christians indeed who know the meaning of life in the Spirit.* Multitudes know what life in the Christian soul is, with all its emotions, its feelings, its impulses. To know "what the Spirit saith", to know life in the Spirit, to be guided by the Spirit, to be checked up by the Spirit, for the Spirit within them to say 'No' or 'Yes'—they know very little about it; very few know anything about that. They are either guided by tradition, how it has always been done; or they are guided by some set and fixed system of truth or doctrine, by what is 'the done thing'; or they are guided by the present crystallized, organized form of Christianity, which is so rigid and established that nothing else can be allowed to have any place: if they were to deviate one hairsbreadth from the way it is done in 'Christianity', they would be wrong—they would be heretics. They are governed and guided like that. They do not know life in the Spirit.

I am not saying that life in the Spirit is a contradiction of truth, or of the Word of God, or of anything that is vital to God, but I am saying there is something more than just a set traditional system. There is such a thing as being led of the

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Spirit of God, and if the book of the Acts says anything, it says this, that you are not allowed to settle down into an immutable, irrevocable position, which is fixed and final.

That is one of the great movements in the book of the Acts. The Apostles were all disposed to make Jerusalem the 'headquarters' of Christianity. Jerusalem was going to be the centre of everything for the world, and so the thing was being built up and consolidated in Jerusalem. The Holy Ghost stepped in and said, 'No—headquarters are in Heaven, not down on this earth at all', and just rooted them out, drove them out from Jerusalem. They were scattered abroad everywhere. The Apostles remained there to stand by something for the Lord, but it was no longer headquarters, although they fought to have it as headquarters. For quite a time they tried to rule everything from Jerusalem, but the Holy Ghost was against them. This great world work was never afterward centred in Jerusalem.

No: the Holy Spirit is a great 'decentralising' factor when men try to establish something on this earth. Get into the Spirit, and you do not know what is going to happen next or where you will be next. You cannot say, 'I am going to be here, or there.' The Holy Spirit has His own way: He "bloweth where he listeth" (John iii. 8). That is the great truth here. Life in the Spirit is like that. You can never say, 'Well, I am going to be in such-and-such a place for so many years, and then I will change my location.' You may be altogether surprised by what the Lord will do. Even the most spiritual men in the New Testament were not given their programme in advance. They were only allowed to take their course so far, and then they were interrupted by the Holy Spirit. When they essayed or sought, the Holy Spirit suffered them not. These men are under the dominion of the Holy Spirit. He has things in hand; headquarters are in Heaven.

That is how it was, then: all things under the government of the trumpet, the voice of the Spirit.

THE CORPORATE RELATEDNESS OF ALL IN THE TESTIMONY

Then, further, all other things were brought into line with and made subject to this one thing—the testimony. I am impressed—as I think, if you read the book of Nehemiah again carefully, you will be impressed—with this wonderful movement. There were all the trades, all the callings, all the professions and all the positions. There were priests and there were goldsmiths and there were apo-

thecaries and there were rulers; and it speaks of a man and his daughters, who all became stonemasons! The priest did not say, 'Oh, it is beneath my dignity to take a trowel and mortar.' The goldsmith did not say, 'I shall spoil my hands for my fine work with gold if I go and do stone-heaving.' The rulers did not say, 'Well, you ought to give me a foreman's job—I can stand by and see that it is done properly; to go down and do it myself—!' Not one of them. Everyone—the priests (I was impressed with the fact that a dignitary built the Dung Gate!), goldsmiths, apothecaries, rulers, men and their daughters—all came into this work. Everything, position, vocation, qualification, was subjected to the one interest—the testimony.

I expect, when the wall was finished, they went back to their jobs; I hope they did. If the Lord does not fill your hands continually with that full ministry in His testimony that demands your separation for the time being, do not think that you do something wrong if you go back to your job. You still remain an apothecary, or a goldsmith, or whatever you may be. Paul remained a tent-maker to the end; you have no point noted in the record of his life at which he gave up making tents. He used it, apparently, alongside of the testimony, and for the testimony, all the way through. Be clear about this. Do not get that false idea about 'full-time ministry'. Be what you are. Use it for the Lord, but make it subject to the dominating interest of the Lord's testimony. That is what happened here.

In the Acts, it seems to have been like that. Although all their trades and their positions are not detailed, you have quite a considerable mention of these things in the letters of Paul, as to who people were, and what people were, and so on. But they were all gathered in, so to speak, within the 'wall': they are all governed by the testimony, and everything is made to serve the testimony. No one says, 'No, I am superior, it is beneath my dignity', or, 'That is not my calling—I am called for something else.' Everybody is seeing that, no matter what they are or what their qualifications are in this world, the thing that matters more than anything else is this testimony.

In Nehemiah iii, you see coming out this beautiful feature, the corporate relatedness of all in the testimony. You notice the little phrase, so constantly recurring through that chapter—"next unto him", "next unto him", "next unto him". Now that is just the repeated statement of a fact, but you are always allowed to use your imagination when you are reading the Bible, and it will always be a good thing if you do. We have the

bare fact stated, but I venture to suggest that there was probably very much spiritual history behind those facts, the history of many a personal victory. 'I do not like working alongside of him—put me next to someone more pleasant, someone I could get on with better!' The fact is just stated—"next unto him", "next unto him". For all we know, in the natural they may have been people who could never get on together at all, never work together. But they work on in this corporate relatedness, and this surely speaks of the great victory within them which the wall was to represent when it was finished.

For it was a great victory when that wall was finished. It was a great victory over all personal interests, over natural dispositions, likes and dislikes. What a victory it was in every realm! That wall was the testimony to victories in the personal life, victories in relationships—"next unto him" and "next unto him" and "next unto him". And it may be, if you allow your imagination to go, that you would find real contradictions in the positions and qualifications and callings of these people who were next to one another. I will not say what I could say there, as to who might be alongside of the other, but looked at from the world it was a glorious mix-up: there was nothing that tallied—priests and goldsmiths and apothecaries and so on, nobles and commoners, all working together alongside of one another. It was no mix-up at all. It was a glorious harmony, because of the victory in their own hearts. What a grand testimony!

Come to your New Testament. How true that was in those first days in the first chapters of the Acts! Personal interests set aside; people of different positions, different qualifications, different outlooks on life, different constitutions and tem-

peraments, were all brought together. Is not that band of twelve men, the nucleus, a glorious and marvellous proof of a mighty victory inside? When you think of what they were naturally, and how they had been before—how they had quarrelled with one another, argued with one another, disputed with one another as to who should be first, and so on—and yet now they stand together; they are as one man. Something has happened, there has been a victory inside, to make this "next unto him" relationship true. When the Apostle Paul brings before us the fulness of God's thought as to His Church, he presents that relationship so beautifully in his picture of the Body of Christ, with the relatedness and inter-relatedness of its members. Every part is in the place appointed by the Lord, and working in relation to every other part. Oh, for this victory in the Lord's people! This will be a testimony—no jealousies, no rivalries, no criticisms, no malice, no personal considerations or feelings; nothing of this kind at all. The Lord's interests come first. The testimony to the Lord Jesus rules all these things out.

Let us ask the Lord to give us a mind like this, to come under this pervading influence of the Holy Spirit, this passion of God, for such a testimony. And let us take the practical aspects of it very seriously to heart. It means all that we have been saying. Again I appeal to you to get away from the types, the figures, the illustrations, to the practical spiritual realities. We are called, in the grace of God, at least to add something to that which has been the Lord's concern through the ages—the bringing of the testimony nearer completion; but in every age the same principles are involved, the same features must characterize—all these things must be true.

T. A-S.

WHAT GOD REALLY WANTS

Reading: Hebrews x. 5-10; Romans xii. 1, 2.

"Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body didst thou prepare for me" (Hebrews x. 5). "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice . . ." (Romans xii. 1).

THE words quoted in the letter to the Hebrews are taken from Psalm xl and referred originally to the Psalmist's own consecration. Redeeming mercy had given to him a new song; he was de-

termined that it should equally give new cause for rejoicing to his Redeemer. Saving grace had lifted him from the depths of misery, out of the horrible pit and from the miry clay; it had also established him firmly as on a rock. Full, then, and overflowing with grateful joy, he began to ask himself how best he could express his thanks in practical terms. He thought of the usual means—the sacrifices and thank-offerings of the Levitical code—but these he felt to be inadequate for the purpose. These gifts, however valuable, were not enough to satisfy God; they were not what could really bring delight to Him. Instead of them, and better than

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them all, he had a body. This was what God really wanted. It should be all for Him, a living sacrifice. Gifts and presents, glowing words and devoted actions, all these were not sufficient, for such redeeming love demanded the consecration of the whole man. "Then said I, Lo, I am come . . . to do thy will, O God."

CHRIST'S PERFECT CONSECRATION

The real allusion, however, was not to the psalmist, but to the Lord Jesus, of whom he spoke prophetically. "In the roll of the book it is written of me"—this can only refer to Christ, the true fulfilment of all the offerings and sacrifices. With Him there was no question of restoration to the Father with its consequent gratitude, for He had never been in the horrible pit of sin or the miry clay of rebellion until He suffered on the Cross for our sins. Yet from the first moment of His entering into the world He had but one motive, and that to use His human body as a means of bringing pleasure to the Father's heart. It was not that God had no interest in the Mosaic laws; indeed it was He Himself who had commanded them and described them in great detail. He had done this, though, not because they had any value in themselves but because they foreshadowed His Son, His real delight is not in the shadow but in the reality, and that reality expressed in terms of human experience. The Lord Jesus provided for God that perfect consecration represented by the whole burnt offering: through the whole of His earthly life His body was indeed presented as a living sacrifice.

OUR CONSECRATION INCLUDED IN HIS

It is clear that, when He thus came into the world to do the Father's will, it was not merely an individual matter, but a determination to do the will of God for us and in us. "By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews x. 10). Christ's perfect consecration to the Father involved also our consecration; in establishing this new order of human life devoted to the will of God He committed us who are His to live the same kind of life. He did not become a whole burnt offering in order that we might be excused full consecration, but He did it in order that we, too, might give God what is better than sacrifices and offerings.

Redemption means not only a new song; it means a new life. If we are Christ's, we are given

the privilege of knowing how blessed is the life of full consecration. He has committed us to be living sacrifices. When the Lord Jesus came into the world, He came to fulfil a destiny which had been fully set out in the Scriptures. In the roll of the book it was written—written in prophecy and in the types—that He was destined to do the will of God from the heart. In a certain lesser sense, we can say that our course has also been set down beforehand, and clearly defined. We are not to continue the unsatisfactory history of men who tried to do something for God in an imperfect way or who gave Him offerings which never really pleased Him. Our destiny is to provide the Father with that kind of life which really is spiritual worship and truly delights His heart. As we enter our new life we are not to say, 'Lo, I am come to do my best', but in Christ to say, by faith, "Lo, I am come . . . to do thy will, O God".

THE LIFE THAT PLEASES GOD

The Lord Jesus came to show us what God really wants. He wants a man who will not just bring Him offerings, but who will in himself be an offering. "In whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hadst no pleasure". In this case the Scriptures are speaking comparatively: it is not that God does not appreciate gifts and offerings, but that He can never find His full satisfaction in them. Men want Him to accept their money, their efforts or their good intentions. He is by no means unmindful or unappreciative of these or of anything that people may try to do in sincere service to Him, but He wants more than all this; He wants a kind of life which is wholly and constantly devoted to pleasing Him. When Paul was writing appreciatively of the great generosity of the Macedonian Christians who gave so willingly and so liberally, he rejoiced that they gave more than gifts—they gave themselves: ". . . first they gave their own selves to the Lord . . ." (II Corinthians viii. 5). This was indeed the grace of God. It was Christ-like.

This perfect consecration of life distinguished the Lord Jesus all the time. Calvary was no disconnected act, but rather the climax of a life which from the very first had been wholly devoted to the will of God. Indeed the greatness of the sacrifice of the Cross was due to the preciousness of the kind of life which was being offered.

"I beseech you . . . to present your bodies a living sacrifice". It would be quite wrong, both foolish and insincere, if we imagined that we were able to consecrate ourselves to the will of God as

Christ did. No, it is only by the mercies of God, by the delivering power of the Cross, and by the Spirit's new life within, that this is possible in our case. But redemption has made it possible. The prophetic psalm gives the secret of this devoted life when it adds (speaking of Christ): "Yea, thy law is within my heart". Speaking of those who are Christ's, and referring to the New Covenant, God says: "I will put my laws on their heart" (Hebrews x. 16); and this is what He wants—men who do His will because they love it.

A NEW KIND OF LIFE

The notable feature about the Man Jesus was not His outstanding knowledge of the will of God or His powerful urging of others to do it, but the simple fact that He lived it out in His own life. Before ever He began to talk about the will of God He loved it and lived it. The Father had never before encountered this quality in human beings. From time to time men had brought Him valuable and sacrificial gifts; from time to time they had performed acts of devotion to Him; yet all the while the life which lay behind the gifts or the deeds was faulty and inconsistent. Until the Lord Jesus came there was no pure delight, no wholehearted pleasure available to God from man's side. "Tæn said I, Lo, I am come . . ." The advent of the Lord Jesus meant an entirely new order of things. Here was a Man who could give God all that He wanted—not sacrifices or offerings as mere tokens of devotion, but a body, a life completely given over to the will of God without reserve and without wavering. No wonder Heaven opened at His baptism, and again at the Transfiguration! It opened to give the wonderful new; that at last there was a Human Life in which the Father could find all His pleasure.

At last God had what He wanted. He did not want more zeal for truth, more powerful preaching, more earnest praying—at least He did not want these as things in themselves. He did not want more money poured into His treasury, more wise interpreters of His word, more earnest workers in His cause—at least He did not want these in the first place. Indeed it might well be argued that in Judaism He had all these things in abundance. Yet He did not desire them; they brought Him no real pleasure. What He did want, and what He could never find, was the pure, true offering of a life given like a whole burnt offering, to live, and if necessary die, just for love of Him. When that Life was manifested in the person of Christ, there was no lack of zeal or earnestness: there was

unction in the preaching and power in the prayer; but the real value to God lay in the body, the daily life, presented as a living sacrifice in true worship of Him. Even if there had been no need for the Lord Jesus to become the sin offering for our sakes, He would still have been the whole burnt offering, the sacrifice of love for the good pleasure of the Father.

CONSECRATION IN THE PRIVATE LIFE

When we talk of full consecration, we usually think of those who are occupying places of prominence or doing deeds of fame for the Lord. We have our own ideas of what God is pleased with, or what we think He ought to be pleased with, and it is largely in the realm of "sacrifices and offerings". "Not that", said the Lord Jesus, but "a body didst thou prepare for me".

The perfect consecration of the Lord Jesus did not wait for His public appearance among men. No, "when he cometh into the world . . .", at the very beginning of His time here on earth, He was devoted to the will of the Father from the heart. There is a private aspect to life, some call it secular, which seems to have no special connection with the work of God, and sometimes even seems to be a waste of time from the viewpoint of things spiritual. It was in this very realm that Christ brought joy to the Father's heart. We are given no particulars of that period, with the one exception of the episode in the Temple when the Lord was twelve years old. This silence is intentional. It is the Spirit's way of reminding us of the supreme importance of the private life, in the home and in the daily tasks which fall to us. Without the incentive of publicity, or the inspiration of ministry, when few seemed to be taking notice of Him and when no human record was being written, in the secret life and in the homely circumstances, He was as devoted to the will of God as when He preached to the multitudes or stood on trial before the rulers. The law of God was not an external influence; it was an internal energy. "Yea, thy law is within my heart".

It was at the end of this period that the voice came from Heaven saying: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew iii. 17). It is true that the occasion of this utterance from Heaven was our Lord's baptism in Jordan, but surely the pronouncement referred to more than the baptism, including the Father's verdict on the life which had so far been lived by the One who now came "to fulfil all righteousness". For thirty years the Lord Jesus had been entrusted

A. WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

with a human body in which to glorify God, and at the end of the period it was affirmed that He had fully satisfied every expectation and had brought great pleasure to His Father's heart. Moreover, when He passed from the Jordan into the wilderness, it was to be tempted, not to be accused. Satan had no answer to Heaven's verdict; he could not contradict what had been said in praise of the Lord Jesus. If only he could have brought up one instance of failure or selfishness on the part of the Lord, if only those thirty 'hidden years'—hidden from men but not from Satan—had revealed one flaw in the character or behaviour of Jesus, he would not have had to work so hard to tempt the Lord; he would only have needed to accuse Him.

CONSECRATION IN A LIFE OF MINISTRY

Immediately after the temptations in the wilderness Christ began His busy life of service for God. It was concerning this phase of testing that again the voice spoke from Heaven: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew xvii. 5). On the Mount of Transfiguration it was seen that the Lord's public life had been just as full in its consecration as His private life had been. There are peculiar temptations associated with work for God. Whether the work be popular and successful, or whether it be met with unbelief, rejection or even persecution, something of a selfish motive or concern can so easily find a place in the heart of the worker. Outwardly the work still goes on. There are not many of us who give up the work of the Lord once we have become associated with it. But how many there are, alas! whose inner motives become mixed, who, all unintentionally, become more concerned with their own position or importance than with the Father's good pleasure. All through those years of activity the Lord Jesus maintained the same single-hearted devotion to the will of God. He had come to do that will, and nothing was allowed to deflect Him from that purpose.

When the whole burnt offering was accepted, it was reduced to ashes. Christ did not waver even when His consecration led Him to the Cross. An unconditional acceptance of the will of God will probably involve strange and unexpected calls on

our faith and obedience. We know now that our Saviour did His greatest service not by preaching or healing but by dying. That was the way in which the Father could be glorified, so that was the way which He willingly accepted. If we are true offerings, there will always be some call for us, also, to be willing to be reduced to ashes; to present God not merely with our gifts, but with ourselves.

PROVING GOD'S WILL

We may ask, How did the Lord know the will of His Father? How can we know what the will of the Lord is? The answer is that only those who have presented their bodies a living sacrifice can truly discover what is the outworking of the will of God. ". . . that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans xii. 2). Much of our trouble with regard to the will of God is that we seek it without having first come to a settled committal to it. God does not reveal His plans for our consideration, giving us the opportunity to decide what we will do after we know exactly what is involved. He calls first for a wholehearted crisis of yielding to Him, and promises us that this will then lead to a clear unfolding of all we need to know.

It was like this with the Lord Jesus. His earthly life began with such a committal. He did not come to learn about the Father's will and then to decide if He would do it. No: already "when he cometh into the world" the issue is settled; and on that basis He is able to prove the detailed outworking of the Father's will for Him. The promise is given to us, in Him, that we, too, shall prove what that will means for us. Proving is not quite the same as knowing; it speaks not of mental apprehension so much as of finding out in experience. We only find out the will of God in this way when we are already committed to it. We get some surprises. We find out that it was not what we expected it to be. But we get many blessings, for we discover how "good and acceptable and perfect" it is. It is not just the Bible students who prove the will of God. It is those who realise the implications of Christ's consecration, and by His grace take their place in Him as living sacrifices.

H. F.

WE BEHELD HIS GLORY

(CHAPTER V OF VOL. II)

THE GLORY OF CHRIST THE VINE

Reading : John xv.

IN considering the subject of this part of our Lord's discourse on the way from the upper room to the Cross, we have to bring into the foreground the governing object of all these discourses, and indeed of all that is reported and recorded in this Gospel. It is an object that is seen in a peculiar way to govern the early part of this chapter—the discourse on the vine. Before we can understand all the rest—everything that the Lord is saying here—we must see the object for which the vine exists. That object is clearly shown to be nothing less than *the glory, pleasure, and satisfaction of God.*

We have previously defined the glory of God as being His Divine nature satisfied in seeing His purposes realised: His very nature in its peculiar requirements satisfied—satisfied in the realisation of its objects. But we must not just take that as a definition or a statement in words; we must feel it. It is the very being of God—what He is in His nature—finding an answer in kind, as embodied in purposes of His heart. When there is a correspondence between God and the object—the sentient object—of His work, there is a *sense of glory*; it may express itself in worship, joy, rest, gratification, a burst of praise. But this is something rather to feel than to grasp mentally.

Thus, it is the glory or the glorifying of the Father for which the vine corporately exists. He is glorified in that which is the fruit or issue of the existence of the vine. So we let the glory of God interpret every statement of the Lord Jesus in this remarkable, wonderful discourse. We cannot just now go through the whole, sentence by sentence, statement by statement. But if we take this matter of God requiring to be satisfied in His nature, and bring it alongside of each utterance of the Lord Jesus throughout this discourse, it will explain everything. It will even solve some of those long-standing problems which this chapter holds. For the moment we must confine ourselves to the statement that the governing object of the existence of the vine is the glory, or glorifying, of God: that is to say, His satisfaction in the realisation of His purposes.

CHRIST THE TRUE VINE

Having established that, we proceed to consider the way to that object, the way to the glorifying of God, as it is revealed in this chapter. As we should expect, right at the very beginning we are confronted with His Son, and the first thing we meet here is a statement which signifies the exclusiveness and uniqueness of the Son of the Father. In words of comparison and contrast, He begins, almost abruptly, it would seem: for, rising from the supper and the upper room, and saying, "Let us go hence", He just proceeds. It sounds almost an abrupt continuation. But there is no interruption; He just goes on talking. "I am the *true* vine". "I" and "true" are words of comparison and contrast. They follow in the line of many such things already said. "I am the *good* shepherd" (John x. 14); that is comparison and contrast. It is invidious. "My Father giveth you the *true* bread out of heaven" (John vi. 32).

This comparison of the vine is, of course, with Israel who was the Lord's vine. He "brought a vine out of Egypt" (Psa. lxxx. 8), but that vine failed to produce the fruit for the glory of God; that is, the satisfaction of God's nature in the realisation of His purpose. It proved a false vine—false to the Father's nature, false to the Father's expectations, false to the Father's purposes; still remaining in the earth for the time, still in a way growing, developing, making a show, making a profession, but now set aside as a false thing, in no way corresponding to the intention of God in its existence.

The Son says: "I am the *true* vine". What He is saying is that everything now for God's satisfaction, for the satisfaction of the Father's nature in the realisation of His purposes, is centred in the Father's Son; everything now is summed up in the Son. "I am". When we gather together all those "I am's" of this Gospel, how many there are of them, and how tremendously emphatic they are, even in the language itself. The 'I' is emphatic. If we had heard the Lord say it, in familiarity with the language used, we should have heard the emphasis there: "I am the *true* vine". So, everywhere in this Gospel, He brings things away from

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

all other connections, centres them in Himself, and says: 'Everything now of God's expectation, God's purpose, God's satisfaction, and therefore God's glory, is centred in His Son.' "I am." As I said just now, that is what we should expect, when we are looking for God's satisfaction and God's realisation of heart-purpose. It is in His Son—we know that so well.

THE BRANCHES

But then a wonderful thing about that—about the glory of God, the satisfaction of God in realised purposes—is carried by the next statement. "Ye are . . ." "I am the vine, ye are the branches" (vs. 5), and in between "my Father" (vs. 1). We must always keep the terms clearly before us: the husbandry is that of the Father; this has come as from a Father. It is something begotten of God, something born of God; something with which He, as Father, is bound up in a heart-relationship, for which He is jealous with the jealousy of a Father. This is not just a proprietor, an owner. This is something of an inward relatedness, not merely outward. The Father's heart is bound up with this. It is pre-eminently a matter of love.

IDENTITY OF LIFE

"Ye are the branches." In this statement there is at once struck the note which is fundamental to the whole New Testament revelation: the note of identity of life. What a dominant matter that is in the New Testament, as well as in our own experience! Of course, we are now able to read into this the so much greater revelation which came afterward as to its meaning, that of which this was but an illustration. We 'know it all' now; it is one of the most familiar truths to us; and yet it is the matter upon which the Father is concentrating every day of our lives, and it is the matter which gives rise to by far the greater measure of our troubles and difficulties.

There is not an adhesion to Christ; there is not a 'coming to' Him. There is a sense in which we come to Him, in the sense of His words "Come unto me" (Matt. xi. 28); or else "ye will not come to me" (John v. 40); but no one would ever say, in the light of the New Testament, that coming to the Lord Jesus makes us an organic part of Him. We need all those other illustrations that are in the New Testament really to express this, e.g. "planted together", "born anew", 'buried—raised with Christ', and so on. We do not just come as people, and range ourselves at the side of a certain One, and then go on together. That is not

the teaching of the New Testament. We come to Him and then are plunged into His grave, and out of that grave we do not rise in our old life, separate and different. "I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20).

Now we are familiar with that truth, but that is what the Lord here lays down as the essential and indispensable basis of any satisfaction to the Father and realisation of His purpose. It is basic to that; for only the Son can satisfy the Father, and only in the Son can the Father's purposes be realised. Therefore, if that is to be in any way fulfilled through a corporate instrument, there must be an absolute identity of life. We know now how that takes place: whatever there is going to be will not be from us—it will be from Him.

But I do want specially to underline that point, that it is not our coming unto Him that has this result; it is what arises from His life within. It is the rising out from, and not the coming unto, that makes all the difference. We can adhere, we can sponsor, we can attach, we can take up a position; we can 'come just as we are'—and go on just as we are. We can still be in a kind of relatedness to the Lord which does not bring with it any rising out from the Lord, and it makes all the difference to what kind of life ours is going to be in the matter of God's glory. That is what the Lord is saying here, in more words. He is pointing out that there can be a kind of relatedness to Himself which does not bear this fruit to the Father's satisfaction and glory; something somewhere is lacking. Whatever the function of the branches—and that function is to bear the fruit of the vine—they can do nothing in that matter apart from this identity of life. This is a deep inward oneness with the Lord, which is not two things, but is only one thing; and that one thing is the Lord Jesus as the life.

The whole teaching of the New Testament is that union with Christ implies the end of any separateness of existence as apart from or other than Christ Himself. It is existence now as from a birth, not from an attachment; from a life imparted which has never before been possessed. It is something quite new, quite fresh, quite other than there was hitherto. That is the uniqueness and exclusiveness of Christ. So the branches become a part of something unique, something different from all that we know of mankind and creation, something that has not been before.

THE PURPOSE OF THE VINE'S EXISTENCE

We come now to this matter of fruit, and we note that, so far as the glory of God is concerned,

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it is a governing matter. It is impressive that the Lord should have chosen the vine as the symbol of this means of reaching His end. You know so well that a vine has no other use in all the world but to bear fruit. It has no by-products. There are some things from which, if the main object is realised or even has failed, you can get other things, by-products; there are secondary uses. But you cannot even make a walking-stick out of a vine. If it does not bear fruit, it is good for nothing. There is no other purpose to which you can turn a vine except to make a bonfire of it.

The whole object of the existence of Christ and His members is this matter of fruit. The Lord expresses Himself here in strong terms. If fruit is not forthcoming, He says, such branches are cast out, gathered, thrown on the fire, burned. Men do not say, Oh, well, it is not bearing any fruit, but we can turn it to this use and to that, we can make it serve some purpose. There is no alternative for a vine. And there is no alternative for your life and mine, in relation to Christ, but the glory of God. God has no secondary purposes for us, saying, Oh, well, they are not bearing any fruit—we will make some other use of them. No: the glory of God in satisfaction, in the realisation of His purpose—*His* purpose—is the only justification for our existence in relation to Christ.

That is precisely the reason why Israel was cast off and burned. An old doctrinal or theological question arises here; but I am not going to follow that out. Is Israel in the fire? Have men cast Israel into the fire, since God cast Israel off? Well, we know the answer to that. But, leaving that aside for the moment, you see the point: it is that, with God, this vine is only justified in having an existence in the satisfaction of His nature and in the fulfilment of His purposes. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit".

FRUIT THE EVIDENCE OF LIFE

And it is the fruit which is the evidence of the life. That is what the Lord comes down upon. He does not say that branches and leaves justify the existence or prove anything. It is the fruit which proves everything, and it is the fruit which proves the life. He fastens upon that: the fruit proves the life. And Christ's life is essentially fruitful. An unfruitful Christian is a contradiction, a contradiction of Christ, a contradiction of the life of Christ. Christ did not have to make efforts to be fruitful; there was no effort in His fruitfulness. It was spontaneous. The life itself is spontaneously, inevitably fruitful.

Was it not just there that Mr. Hudson Taylor came to his life crisis, when, after years, he was brought to a complete standstill on this question of fruitfulness? The whole crisis turned upon his struggling, his agonizing, his taking the strain and burden of this matter of fruitfulness, until he fretted himself into despair. And then he came upon this chapter of John's Gospel, and the Lord, so to speak, stood by him and opened it up to him, and showed him that *He* was the life of the vine, and the branches had to do nothing by way of struggle to bear fruit. All they had to do was to let the life have its way unhindered. It came as a revelation to him; you have it in that great chapter in his autobiography, 'The Exchanged Life'. If the life of the Lord is not frustrated, is not hindered, or, to use the Lord's word here and its reiteration, if we abide in Him, that is, keep on Christ's ground and do not take our own or any other ground, the life proves itself spontaneously in fruitfulness without any effort.

THE BEARING OF FRUIT IS SERVICE

And inasmuch as this fruit-bearing is the service which is rendered to God and includes all that is meant by Christian service, the service of the Lord; inasmuch as the fruit-bearing is the service of the believer and the Church: then it is quite clear here that service and union with Christ—the right kind of union with Christ, the kind that we have mentioned—are the same thing. It is a union that means identity of life through losing our own and having His; yielding up our apartness, our independent life, and taking His. That union is spontaneously service.

We have thought of the service of God as a matter of preaching and teaching and doing a multitude of things for the Lord. They may only be the framework; they may only be the outer casing, like the bark of a tree. The Lord may pour His life through such methods and means, or He may not let us do any preaching or teaching. In the case of some, He may have the greatest measure of fruit without ever any preaching being done at all. Fruit is the spontaneous expression of a deep-rooted oneness with Christ, and there may be very much satisfaction and glory to God through people who are never allowed to preach or teach or do any of those things which we call Christian work. But to express Christ, to live Christ, to manifest Christ, to let everything around feel Christ and be touched by Christ through our presence—that certainly is to the glory of God and the satisfaction of His heart, and that is service.

For what is this fruit? It is the life of Christ

manifested, and God help both the preachers and the teachers and the workers, and those to whom they preach, if there is not a manifestation of Christ coming through what they are saying and doing. The real heart of it is this deep union of life with the Lord, and it is this kind of service which satisfies God.

THE PRUNING KNIFE

“Every branch that beareth fruit, he cleanseth it”, or “purgeth it”: by which we understand Him to mean that He is pruning, and there are one or two things which we must conclude from this procedure of the Lord. He does not say that if a branch bears no fruit, He prunes it to bear fruit—no, He cuts that off; but if it bears some fruit, He “cleanseth it, that it may bear more fruit”. The point here is that, for the Father’s full satisfaction, it is not merely size that weighs with Him, it is not just bigness, it is not the expansiveness of the branches. The thing which counts with the Father ultimately is the quality and amount of fruit—in other words, the measure of Christ, the essential qualities of Christ. Other metaphors or figures—the ‘Body of Christ’ pre-eminently—will be used in the later New Testament to set forth this principle, but here it is the measure of Christ that the Father is seeking.

We can press that even more closely. Even in that which comes from the Lord—for the fruit comes from the Lord; it is the expression of His life—even in that very vine, the Lord takes measures of curtailment in order to get intrinsic values. Paul and the churches might well have thought that it would be of far more value to God if he had been kept at liberty, kept free to travel about over the world and meet the saints; but God’s pruning knife decided that it would be of greater intrinsic value if Paul’s liberty were curtailed and he were put in prison. We know the wisdom of God in that now. Thank God for what came out of that prison in those letters—intrinsic value indeed! Sometimes the wisdom and the love of God operate in what looks like limitation, in certain ways and certain directions, in order to get intrinsic value. A seed-plot is an intensive thing, not necessarily an expansive thing; but it may be that presently the whole world will be sown from that seed-plot: that plant or that crop will be reproduced everywhere. And the Lord is saying here, ‘I am not first of all interested in how big and expansive you are, in what you are doing, even though it may be for Me, and even though it may be, in measure, by the life which I have given you. What I am primarily concerned about is the richness of the fruit, the quality

of the fruit and the real measure of intrinsic value’. You can have grapes *and* grapes, and the Lord is after the first quality. It means that there is a good deal of saying ‘No’ when that life is at work. Here are these branches spreading, and the knife says, ‘No, not that, not that, not that’. The pruning knife is a great instrument for God’s ‘No’—but it is governed by God’s ‘Yes’. The ‘Yes’ lies hidden behind. The ‘Yes’ relates to the quality and the intrinsic value of the fruit, the measure of Divine satisfaction, and it is that which governs the ‘No’, which lops off.

THE OBJECT OF THE PRUNING

Finally, the work of the Husbandman, the Father, with His pruning knife, has as its object the preserving of true character. That is true in all pruning, as you know. You go along the path there in the garden. You will see some grafted rose bushes which once bore beautiful roses. They were not pruned. Now they have run wild: the wild stocks have been allowed to supplant the beautiful grafted forms, and they are only bearing what we call dog-roses. They may be pretty, but we know that the plant has run wild for want of the knife. The result is not the real thing—it is a wild thing; it is something inferior, it is not what it might have been. It is so easy for us, if the Lord spares the knife and leaves us alone, to lose distinctive character. Just let us get out of the Lord and run free, take our own way for a bit, and we lose distinctiveness of character. There is a wildness, a foreign element that comes in, and the real pleasure of the Lord is lost. It is not until that knife comes back and does some pretty hard work, saying, ‘No, no, not that way, not that way’, that the Lord recovers the thing which He first intended as His own satisfaction. But what is the result? “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full”. We have to admit, after all, that it was not in that independent way that we really found our joy; our joy is being in the way of the Lord’s first appointment and choice, and our joy is restored very often by the knife. “That my joy may be in you”.

If you go to Hebrews xii, you will see the fuller interpretation and explanation. It is the Father’s hand that is upon us to get that which, firstly, justifies our existence—the satisfaction of His nature, the fulfilment of His purpose—and in so doing brings His joy into our hearts. It is not our joy in the first place, but His. Then our joy is His joy—and our joy is fulfilled.

T. A-S.

A GREAT WARFARE

STUDIES IN BUNYAN'S "HOLY WAR" IV

IN our earlier studies we have seen something of the great issues at stake in the long-drawn-out conflict over Mansoul, and we can never be too deeply impressed with these issues. Not only is the destiny of MAN involved (and that means *our* destiny), but Heaven is warring to vindicate and to satisfy God, and to win for God's Son all that is rightfully His. How solemn are the issues behind every Christian's life! How glorious will be the end if we co-operate fully with the grace of God!

We have spied out and discovered something of the strategy and strength of the enemy, and found good cause not to under-estimate him; but then, with Bunyan's invaluable help, we have also surveyed the overwhelming superiority of Heaven's power. We must now turn to consider—

MANSOUL'S RESPONSIBILITY AND CO-OPERATION

The Christian life is a holy communion between the grace of God and us. It is of the greatest importance that we realise that God always deals with us as free, moral beings. He may and does use a thousand means to bring us to Himself and to urge us on to glory, but always in His dealings with us a point is reached when 'it is up to us', and He waits for our response. He must have our co-operation. God is not interested in automatons. His purpose is bound up with real people, who are responding fully, gladly and voluntarily to Him. The moment we cease to be real people (and this is what is really involved in a certain erroneous view of predestination), the whole purpose of God in man has gone down in ruins. God has a heart that can never be satisfied by puppets.

When Mansoul fell to Emmanuel, we saw that He entered the Town bringing with Him a great heavenly company. With Him came *The Lord Chief Secretary* of the Father's House (the Holy Spirit), who was to be First Minister in the Town. Then, there were *the Nine Heavenly Captains*, the energies of heavenly life, the energies of righteousness and grace; and with Emmanuel came also Mr. *God's Peace*, who 'was made Governor of the Town in general, especially over the Castle' (cf. Phil. iv. 7). In a word, Heaven came into Mansoul. We know it is true. When

Christ comes into our hearts, Heaven comes in.

Now, we might have supposed that, with the coming of Emmanuel and His heavenly retinue, the Mansouliaus, the true and native inhabitants of the Town, would have been ousted or at best given very subordinate and insignificant positions in the new régime. But here is Bunyan's wisdom: when Emmanuel forms His government and 'new-models' the Town, *we find that the new constitution consists of a wonderful fellowship, a beautiful partnership between Heaven and the Mansouliaus.* In fact, as we shall see presently, Emmanuel insists on having Mansoul's full co-operation. Emmanuel appoints my Lord *Willbewill* (the human will), who had but lately been such a great doer for Diabolus, 'to rule under Him for the good of the Town.' My Lord *Understanding* once again takes up his office as Lord Mayor, and Emmanuel bids him 'that he should build him a Palace near Eye-gate, and that he should build it in fashion like a Tower for defence. He bid him also that he should read in the Revelation of Mysteries all the days of his life, that he might know how to perform his office aright.' Old Mr. *Conscience* takes up a new appointment as junior minister to the Lord Chief Secretary, Bunyan thereby indicating the close relationship between the Holy Spirit and the human spirit.

Now, what is the main point of all this? It is that the wonderful fact that Christ is in us, as "the hope of glory", does not make us less than real people. On the one hand we must avoid the pitfall of *legality*, that is, trying to produce what God wants, of ourselves and from ourselves. Oh, the futility of self-effort! The word of the Lord Jesus is final: "Apart from me ye can do nothing." On the other hand we must avoid the pitfall of *passivity*, that is, expecting God to do everything, while we sit back, without our exercise of faith and co-operation. Too often, perhaps, the Lord has to say, 'apart from you, I can do nothing.' We need to keep the balance which we see in Paul's life—"I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 13).

How the enemy loves to see us in this pit of passivity, frightened to do anything lest perchance we should move in the flesh, constantly trying to analyse ourselves to see whether we are in the flesh or in the Spirit. We may be quite as useless

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to the Lord in our futile passivity as in our fleshly activity. Of course, there is a true waiting upon and for the Lord. We have to learn to be "silent unto God" (Ps. lxii. 1), but let us watch against that lack of faith that tends to spiritual limpress. Christ is to be expressed through real people, not colourless nonentities. While God has a tremendous work on to make us *whole* in Christ, we shall always be *ourselves* fundamentally. Human personality is a wonderful creation of God. The infinite variety in human personality, when redeemed and made whole by the miracle of transforming grace, is to provide the Lord with His chief means of expressing His glories. When Paul wrote Galatians ii. 20, he did not mean that *Paul* had ceased to exist. There will always be a real man called Paul "in Christ". While Paul begins this verse—"I have been crucified with Christ . . . it is no longer I that live . . . Christ liveth in me", he goes on—"that life which *I now live* . . . *I live* in faith". The fact is that until Paul was "in Christ" he was only the shadow of a real man. It is only "in Christ" that we are really alive. Christ is our glorious destiny. Outside of Christ man is but a travesty of the real thing, a tragic passing shadow. Not until the Golden Prince, Emmanuel, came to dwell in Mansoul did the Town begin to appreciate something of that high destiny for which it had been built by the good King Shaddai.

THE TRUE WORK OF THE CROSS

In our Key to the Characters in *The Holy War* (issued with the last number of this magazine), we see that there are two sides to the Cross. There is what we will call the *redemptive* aspect of the Cross on the one hand, and on the other what we will call the *destructive* aspect. In the diagram we see that there are four groups of characters in Bunyan's allegory. There are those that issue from Heaven, 'From the Court', and we need only say that the Cross is a glory and a wonder in Heaven. On the other side we have the characters that issue 'From the Pit', headed by the Giant Diabolus. For them the Cross spells ruin and destruction, and they know it. For the Diabolonians, 'the true Sons of the Pit', the offspring and allies of Diabolus *in the Town*, the Cross also means terror and destruction. But what of the Mansoulans; what did the Cross mean to them? *Redemption, not extinction.*

Now, here is something of the greatest importance. The Lord, by His Cross, is making war upon the Diabolonians for the deliverance of the Mansoulans. The Lord purposes to exterminate the

Diabolonians *in us*—that which is of Satan in us; but the power of His Cross is established in our lives by the Holy Spirit, *not to kill us, but to free us*. This is a most important distinction. Because Satan has got such a terrible foothold in human nature, because we are so deeply involved in an unholy alliance with the evil one, it sometimes seems as if the Lord is killing *us*, whereas He is really destroying the works of the Devil *in us*. Let us make no mistake about it: there is that in us which is going to die, which must die, which has no place in Heaven. In the Cross of the Lord Jesus a certain *kind* of person (the kind we are by nature) goes out for ever, but the grace of God is at work in us to make us of a different kind, like Christ.

See how clear and helpful Bunyan is on this point. When Emmanuel was giving His captains their final orders prior to the capture of Mansoul, He told them 'to be sure to show themselves Men of War against Diabolus and all Diabolonians; but *favourable, merciful, and meek* to the old inhabitants of Mansoul.' The Lord show us the far-reaching significance of this distinction between Mansoulans and Diabolonians.

THE CROSS AND THE DIABOLONIANS

When Mansoul had been recaptured by Emmanuel, the Cross was set up *in the Town*, as a power against the lurking Diabolonians who still remained in their dens in and about the wall. Of these Diabolonians there were two species. There were the *pure-bred* variety who came with Diabolus from the pit, such as Mr. *Puff-up*, who were easily recognised and therefore fairly easily brought to the Cross; but there were also the *home-bred* Diabolonians, such as Mr. *Carnal-Security*, who, being born in the Town, were much more difficult to discover and deal with, since they often looked like Mansoulans, and especially so if Mansoul was in a poor spiritual state. The case of Mr. *Carnal-Security* ("confidence in the flesh") is a significant one, for it indicates the depth of Satan's grip upon human nature, and helps us to understand why the Lord has sometimes to deal with us so drastically and so deeply. In the time of Mansoul's rebellion, the Lord Willbewill, who was then a great one for Diabolus, was pleased to give his daughter, *the Lady Fear-Nothing*, to a Diabolonian, Mr. *Self-Conceit*, to wife. The fruit of their union was Mr. *Carnal-Security*, who presently did great injury to the Town. Now, there is nothing wrong with *fearlessness*, but when fearlessness is wedded to self-conceit, the result will

be that spiritual plague of self-confidence.

Well, the Lord's answer to Diabolonians of whatever sort is the Cross, and we must now quote Bunyan's most illuminating report of the execution of some Diabolonians who had been caught, tried, and condemned in Mansoul after Emmanuel's capture of the Town.

'Now, the day was come in which the prisoners in Mansoul were to be executed. So they were brought to the Cross, and that by Mansoul, in most solemn manner; for the Prince said that this should be done by the hand of Mansoul. Proof of sincerity pleases me well; let Mansoul, therefore, first lay their hands upon these Diabolonians to destroy them.

'So the Town of Mansoul slew them, according to the word of their Prince; but when the Prisoners were brought to the Cross to die, you can hardly believe what troublesome work Mansoul had of it to put the Diabolonians to death; for the men knowing that they must die, what did they but took courage at the Cross, and there resisted the men of the Town? Wherefore, the men of Mansoul were forced to cry out for help to the Captains and Men of war. Now the great Shaddai had a Secretary in the Town, and he was a great lover of the men of Mansoul, and he was at the place of Execution also; so he, hearing the men of Mansoul cry out against the strugglings and unruliness of the Prisoners, rose up from his place, and came and put his hands upon the hands of the men of Mansoul. So they crucified the Diabolonians that had been a plague, a grief, and an offence to the Town.'

THE CROSS AND THE MANSOULIANS

We have said that for the true inhabitants of Mansoul, that is, for man, created by God and re-created in Christ, the Cross brings redemption, deliverance, cleansing and healing; but we shall be mistaken if we think that Emmanuel just overlooked the fact that the Mansouliaus had been so deeply and willingly involved with His enemy. The Cross has many aspects and the Lord is very wise in all His dealings with us. Let us take the case of the Lord Willbewill first, by way of illustrating what we mean.

The Lord Willbewill, who, of course, represents the will of man, *the human will*, had been the most active Mansouliau in the service of Diabolus during Mansoul's rebellion. Well do we know, as we have said before, the strength of the enemy entrenched within the will of fallen man. The will is the key to man's being. Now, when Emmanuel

came in, Willbewill was not put to death, but he had a very bad time. We read that:

'*Captain Execution* hunted the Lord Willbewill sorely; he suffered him not to rest in any corner. He pursued him so hard that he drove his men from him, and made him glad to thrust his head into a hole.'

Now, *Captain Execution* really represents *the Cross in action*. Human self-will must be chased until it buries its head in a hole. It takes the Lord a long time to get our wills completely over on to His side. Sometimes we sing:

'Chase this self-will through all my heart,
Through all its latent mazes there;
Make me Thy duteous child, that I
Ceaseless may Abba, Father, cry.'

And this really sums it up. But note: Willbewill is destined to live to serve Emmanuel. Mansoul would not be Mansoul without him; *man would no longer be man without a will of his own*; yet Heaven will be filled one day with happy slaves who have been conquered by the love of God and overcome by His grace.

A further illustration of the way in which the Mansouliaus learnt the meaning of the Cross is to be found in the way in which Emmanuel dealt with the Town after its capture. At first Emmanuel is very reserved and there is much heart-searching in Mansoul. The growing realisation of its sin confounds the Town. Mr. *Desires-Awake* and Mr. *Wet-Eyes* are sent to petition the Prince, while the ruling powers in the Town are kept in ward by Emmanuel's Captains. At length, the Elders of the Town, including Willbewill, are summoned by the Prince, and when they appear before Him as Mansoul's representatives, they do so as self-condemned prisoners, with ropes about their necks. 'Thou art just, for we have sinned', is all they have to say; 'these ropes are to bind us withal, to the place of Execution, if Mercy be not pleasing in thy sight.' Mansoul has at last realised that it deserves nothing but death. The judicial meaning of the Cross has been brought home to the Town—the fact of guiltiness before the law. Up to this moment Emmanuel has withheld the shining forth of His grace, but now it is safe for the Town to be overwhelmed with the wonder of *forgiveness*, the possibility of which Emmanuel has Himself secured in His Cross. How wise the Lord is! This is Love's Wisdom, that it lets the prodigal 'come to himself'. It was sentiment, not love, that brought Absalom back. Absalom never 'came to himself', with what tragic results we know. God's love is very, very wise. He knows what is in man.

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THE MINISTRY OF LORD WILLBEWILL,
GOVERNOR OF THE TOWN UNDER
EMMANUEL

Bunyan's study of the Lord Willbewill is one of the most valuable things in his history of the War. We have already seen that Willbewill was Diabolus' staunchest friend in Mansoul, and how strongly he came under Emmanuel's hand of chastening at the Town's deliverance. We must now see the vital part he was called upon to play in Emmanuel's new régime.

Willbewill was appointed 'to rule under the Prince for the good of the Town'. The will is a ruling factor in man's constitution. Decision and decisiveness are important factors in spiritual progress and warfare. Very often everything turns upon *an act of will*. Further, Willbewill was charged—

'to take care of the Gates (the senses), the Wall (the body, the flesh), and Towers in Mansoul; also the Prince gave him the Militia into his hand, and a special charge to withstand all insurrections and tumults . . . against the peace. He also gave him in commission, that if he found any of the Diabolonians lurking in any corner of Mansoul, he should apprehend them.'

Willbewill had thus to rule over the Gates, the senses. It is true that we sometimes need *quite deliberately* to shut our ears and our eyes and even our mouths! At other times the gates need to be thrown open. And Feel-Gate especially needs ruling. The Wall also needs careful watching. When Paul said, "I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage" (I Cor. ix. 27), he was just saying that as far as he was concerned Willbewill was continually patrolling the wall, since it was in the wall that so many of the Diabolonians had their dens.

Then we come to Willbewill's close comradeship with the heavenly Captains, and with Captain Credence in particular. While he enlisted the help of Judgment and Execution, that in the power of righteousness he might rule the Town, it is his succouring of Captain Credence in the day of adversity that we shall find most instructive.

Credence, the spirit of faith, had suffered defeat in an encounter with the enemy and lay wounded. It was a dark hour with the leading Captain out of action; but *now* it was that 'Willbewill did play the Man', for he stood up and made a brave speech of defiance to the enemy, which 'did somewhat abate the boldness of Diabolus, and . . . succour the Townsmen and Captains: yea, *it was as a Plaster to the brave Captain Credence's Wound.*' How instructive this is! There are times when

faith is baffled, defeated and wounded, and the enemy is on top of us. Then it is that we are inclined to wallow in our weakness and to give way. It is at such times that *an act of will* is needed. We shall find the Lord responds very swiftly if we say resolutely: '*I will not give way to myself, my feelings, this impossible situation; I will be strong in the Lord: God is still on the throne!*' It is not that our wills are adequate in themselves. It is not a question of being 'strong-willed'. But Heaven's power is right behind us when we are *positive, on the ground of all that Christ is*. Our wills may provide Heaven with the only channel in a hopeless situation. What Paul says in another connection, in Romans vii. 18, is capable of a wider application: "for *to will* is present with me".

There is so much in the Word about this matter. Again and again we have the exhortation to "BE STRONG" (Joshua i. 6, 9, 18; I Chron. xxviii. 20; Haggai ii. 4; Eph. vi. 10). The Lord does not say 'Feel strong, imagine yourself strong', but 'BE STRONG IN ME', and that is a matter of the will. Consider also the implication of such verses as:

"Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ . . ." (Rom. xiii. 14).

"Set your mind on the things . . . above" (Col. iii. 2).

"Put to death . . . your members . . . upon the earth . . ." (Col. iii. 5).

"Be ye doers of the word . . ." (James i. 22).

The Lord is just calling us to co-operate fully with the grace of life which is in us.

On another notable occasion we find Willbewill *wielding the Cross* to great effect against the enemy. Having discovered two young Diabolonians, he 'has them to Eye-Gate, where he raised a very high Cross, just in the face of Diabolus and of his army, and there he hanged the young villains, in defiance to Captain Past-Hope, and of the horrible Standard of the Tyrant.' The redeemed and renewed will should be a great factor in the war. Of Willbewill, Bunyan says: 'now Willbewill's blows were *like the blows of a Giant*', as he fought alongside of Captain Credence. Faith and Resolution must fight together. The Psalmist puts it in a nutshell:

"THROUGH THEE *will* we push down our adversaries: THROUGH THY NAME *will* we tread them under that rise up against us" (Psalm xlv. 5).

THE SIGNIFICANCE
OF CAPTAIN EXPERIENCE

While the Nine Captains came from Heaven, *Experience* was born in the Town. He was a Man-

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soulman, as was his fellow, Captain *Self-Denial*. Captain Experience was trained by Captain Crendence and always closely associated with him. Faith and Experience always go hand in hand. We read that 'Captain Experience came under command to Emmanuel, for the good of the Town of Mansoul', and that 'his Scutcheon was *the dead Lion and the dead Bear*'!

The significance of Captain Experience is just this: he did not come from Heaven—he was born in the Town. God does not give us experience as a gift; He gives us the comprehensive gift of Christ and requires us to use and exploit what is in Him. Christ is like an inexhaustible mine of treasure which has to be exploited, like a vast and wealthy continent which has to be explored and possessed. Our experience is what we really

possess of Christ, what we have discovered in Him for ourselves.

"Work out your own salvation . . . for it is God who worketh in you" (Phil. ii, 12, 13).

Christ has come into our hearts, and in Him all the potentialities of eternal life, Heaven itself. How wonderful! But we must use these inexhaustible resources, we must have a heart to "gain Christ", we must go up and possess our possessions. God is dealing with us as real people; *there is that which He will not do for us*; He must have a full response from us. Then we shall find that ours is not a life of self-effort and strain, for like Joseph, our hands will be "made strong, by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob" (Gen. xlix. 24). God is with us when *we are with Him*.

T. L. M.

"LOOKING UNTO JESUS"

"Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Make level the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left" (Proverbs iv. 25–27).

"Therefore let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith" (Hebrews xii. 1, 2).

THERE is a goal; there is a prize. We have been called with high purpose—a purpose so great that the Spirit of God has considered it worth while to fill the Bible with the truth of it and with the continuous urge in relation to it. For the Bible from beginning to end has to do with a course in relation to a goal, an end, a prize: it is just brimful of Divine speaking concerning Divine purpose, a very great purpose. We find this, of course, in a very strong way in this letter to the Hebrews, with its insistent call—"Let us go on". Moreover it gives us the great ground of confidence that the end can be reached, the goal attained, the prize received, the purpose accomplished, in that Christ has got there, Jesus has already gone this way and is there, and He has gone the whole way, the same way as you and as all those who are called according to His purpose are called to go. He has taken our level, accepted all that we have to know or may

know on the course, and has gone through to the end. The fact is stated that He is there, and His being there is a tremendous triumph, for it is the assurance that we can be there also.

"Looking unto Jesus". More correctly that would be stated "looking off unto Jesus". We are coming to that again in a moment, but there is a ground of confidence. We can have assurance about this matter of attaining. One illustration of this is given in this letter to the Hebrews. It is as though the writer saw a ship out on the sea, being grievously battered and thrown about by the storm, in the grip of the wind and the current, and then, if it were possible, one brave representative taking the anchor on a long chain and dropping it within the quiet, peaceful harbour, leaving it there for the ship to pull on, in the sure knowledge that it will come in because it has a vital link with something already there. That is the picture the Apostle presents of this matter. We have this confidence, this hope, "as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and entering into that which is within the veil" (Heb. vi. 19).

There is confidence to be had, but there is also—and this is kept continually in view throughout both Old and New Testaments—there is also the possibility of failing, of falling short, of missing the mark. Illustrations are given of this. The possibility is always there—not of losing our salvation, that is not the point—but of failing to attain to the full purpose of God in our salvation.

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THE PERILS
OF WRONG WAYS OF LOOKING

This possibility of failure and missing the mark, of coming short, is related to our looking. It seems to me that it is all summed up in that way—looking. This matter of looking, therefore, is very important. It depends entirely upon where our eyes are and where they are kept. In the Word of God there are many directions in which people are warned against looking, because of the hazards to the whole progress and course of things toward the goal; the hazards of a wrong look, of a false direction, of the eyes getting off the mark.

THE BACKWARD LOOK

There is the one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back, and is therefore not fit for the kingdom (Luke ix. 62). That is the backward look. It is the look which Israel took in the wilderness. "They turned again and tempted God, and provoked the Holy One of Israel" (Psa. lxxviii. 41). They looked back and spoiled their furrow, they spoiled their whole course. They failed to enter in simply because they looked in the wrong direction, that is, they looked back.

You know that that was one of the troubles in New Testament times. The letter to the Galatians was written because of that peril. They were beginning to look back. There was a voice from behind; the voice of the Judaizers was calling them from behind: 'Come back'—not to the world, not to ungodliness, not to forsake Christ; but to come back to a religious life which was less than that fulness of Christ to which they had been called; to a religious life which was not a spiritual life. They were in danger of looking back. They had indeed already half looked back and had come to a standstill. They had been going on, but now they had stopped going on, and the question was—would they continue to go on or would they go back? That letter was written to induce a going on. This letter to the Hebrews was written for the same purpose. The peril of a backward look is always there, in some way or another.

LOOKING AROUND

And then we are told of some people who looked around when they were commanded not to look around. "Look not around thee" (Isaiah xli. 10, margin). I think that is what Peter did. When he was beginning to walk on the water he took his eyes off the Lord and looked around and

he went down (Matthew xiv. 28–31). His eyes changed their direction and he began to look around. "When he saw the wind" (verse 30). That is what Israel did when the spies went out and came back with their wrong report. They looked around—walled cities, giants, all kinds of difficulties. They looked around, they got their eyes off the Lord. Only two of them kept their eyes in the right direction and they went through eventually to the end. "Look not around". That is, do not allow circumstances so to lay hold of your vision and to fasten upon your outlook that they control your movement. "Let thine eyes look right on"—not around.

THE TOO-NEAR LOOK

Then there were some people to whom Paul spoke: he told them that their look was much too near. He said, 'You only see what is immediately before your eyes, your vision is merely of things near you, these are the things that influence you'. Too short a range of vision leads to your life becoming smaller than the Lord would have it; you become far too easily satisfied and contented in the realm of the things of the Lord; you have a small, narrow horizon—you are not looking right on. Things near—that may apply in different ways. The things that are near are always the things that are most likely to upset us, to limit us, to disconcert us. We do become so occupied with the thing that is nearest. When we are right up against a situation and something is right up against us, we are in such danger of thinking that is all, that is everything, that we forget we have negotiated many such an obstacle before which we thought was going to be the end of everything for us. We learn our lesson so slowly. Here is another thing right at hand, right before our eyes; another mountain, another hedge, another real difficulty; and again we think—'This is going to spoil everything, this is going to be the end of everything'. All we see is the thing near at hand.

But to look right on means surely to say this—'Yes, this is a difficulty, but there is another side to it, it is not going to be the end'. It is one of the things that is included in 'laying aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset'. What is "the sin which doth so easily beset"? It is this, that the big difficulty of to-day blots out tomorrow, seems to get right in the way of any future at all. That is the easily begetting sin. Do not have too near a view, do not have too small an horizon. "Let thine eyes look right on". There is something very much more than the difficulty of the

day, the very present thing, the near thing. The Lord will teach us as we go on that we can reckon on very much more than the things which are up against us now. We shall go on and leave them behind. Do not let us take them as the limit. Whatever they are, they are not the end.

THE SELFISH LOOK

Again the Apostle said, speaking to some believers, “. . . not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others” (Phil. ii. 4). What did he mean by that? Here, surely, is the selfish look. I think perhaps he meant this, amongst other things: ‘Do not be always affected in your lives by how things touch you, whether you stand to gain or lose by this or that; do not all the time be looking at everything in the light of how it affects you’. “Not looking each of you to his own things”. That is the wrong kind of looking, the wrong direction. It will limit us, and make us small and self-centred.

THE INWARD LOOK

And how much the Apostle had to write about another kind of looking, the inward look. A very great deal of his writing was with the object of getting people to stop looking inside. I think there is nothing more calculated to arrest progress than looking inside. What are we looking for inside, at any rate? Well, of course, we are looking to find something that will satisfy the Lord and give us encouragement, make us feel good, and we never find it. There is nothing more discouraging than this looking inside. It is the wrong kind of looking.

THE SALVATION OF LOOKING UNTO JESUS

It is clear, then, that much is dependent upon our looking, and the Apostle was right when, after writing this long letter so fully bringing into view the great object—partnership with Christ—and urging to go on, he summed it all up in this fragment: “Looking off unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith”. Looking away from the things behind, looking away from those around, looking off from the self-matters altogether, looking beyond the things that are so near, obsessing us now; looking off from ourselves unto Jesus. This is a theme touched upon in our recent book, *Pioneers of the Heavenly Way*. “He looked for the city” (Heb. xi. 10); ‘They looked for a country’ (Heb. xi. 14). How much was bound up

with the look! How they had to battle with this matter of where the eyes wanted to rest, a too early satisfaction of the eyes, a wrong satisfaction of the eyes, a substitute for what God was after. But the Lord was constantly drawing their eyes away from lesser things, causing them to look and look, and that look led them on. As we said in the book (p. 36), they thought from time to time that now they had found it—but they found that it was not so. The eyes of their heart were not satisfied and they had to move on a bit further. The look kept them on the move. It was a look which was heavenly and not earthly.

Now the passage from Proverbs that we have placed at the head of this article says this—“Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Make level the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established (ordered aright)”. There is a great deal packed into that, but it just means this: Get God’s purpose clearly and fully in view—nothing less, nothing other—and adjust the whole of your life to it; adjust your life to the ultimate.

KEEP GOD’S END IN VIEW

One of our words recently to a friend in baptism was the word ‘eternal’. I pondered it during the day before passing it on. It took hold of me in this very connection. “Our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (II Cor. iv. 17, 18). The eternal is kept in view, and life is adjusted in every way to God’s end. How busy the enemy is to circumvent the onward movement and the final attainment, by getting us entangled and compromised in this earth; somehow to slip in something that will be a check, an arrest, a hold-up. Oh, the spiritual tragedies all around by some foolish relationship, some entanglement, some consideration of convenience, some pandering to the satisfaction of the flesh, something somehow slipped in by the enemy: and there it is—you just cannot go right on to God’s end. Something is holding you back, some relationship is keeping you tied up, something has come in.

Now this word is—adjust everything to the end. have all your affairs in life brought into line with God’s end. When you are considering a relationship, have God’s end in view. When you are considering the next step in your life, have God’s end

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in view. When you are deciding where you are going to live and do your work, have God's end in view. When you are deciding what your business is going to be, have God's end in view. Everything brought into line—that is the meaning of this "Make level the path of thy feet" or "Weigh carefully the path of thy feet". We have to say to ourselves, "Now then, this is an opportunity, a prospect, that seems to hold a lot of good; but first of all, what is this going to mean for the Lord, how does this relate to the full end of God?" Nothing less than that must weigh with us. "Let thine eyes look right on"—not just at this thing, not even at what it seems to promise, but right on. How does it relate to the end? In all things, look beyond; see what is the relation to the full end of God; and adjust accordingly. Get the vision, and adjust life as far as possible in relation to it. "Weigh carefully the paths of thy feet and order them aright. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left". "Let thine eyes look right on".

Some of you may find yourselves in spheres and

conditions where perhaps you will have many a temptation to accept something less, where it seems impossible to have all that you would like to have, where it seems that God's full purpose cannot be realised: therefore you will settle down to something less and other. You may meet all kinds of things to divert you from the course of the on-high calling. The word to you is: "Let thine eyes look right on". Remember your Lord, offered the kingdoms of this world and the glory thereof: He refused them and looked right on. Yes, He was offered an easy way out, a way out of the Cross; but no, He let His eyes look right on, He set His face as a flint. His eyes looked right on, and here it is recorded, as we read in the next part of the verse from Hebrews: "Looking off unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God". He set His eyes on God's end. May we have grace to do the same.

T. A-S.

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

SAILING AGAINST THE WIND

BANG! The gunshot startled young Derek, and made him look quickly out to the river to see what could have caused it. With his father he had been walking along the bank of the Clyde, when all of a sudden the calm of the afternoon was broken by the sound of this shot. He looked across the water to the boat from which the gun had been fired. It was not a warship, or anything like it, but only a very peaceful-looking steam launch. Derek was puzzled to know what the shot meant, so, as usual, he asked his father. Father knew everything, or seemed to do so, and was always ready to answer the many questions put to him by his son. Not that it was very hard this time, for if the boy had used his eyes he would have seen that there was a yacht race going on, and that the gun had been fired because the first yacht had just passed the steamer which served as a winning post. The yacht had been the first to get to the end of the course, and so had won the race.

Behind the winner, and away into the distance, there stretched a line of beautiful boats, their white sails spread to the breeze. They were sailing on to finish the course, even though their owners knew that they could no longer win the race. They had no engines to drive them along, nor had they any men to row them, but were all blown along by the breeze.

If they all had the same wind, then how could some go faster than others? What did it mean that they were all strung out in a long line, some pressing forward to the front, and others being left far behind? If there was only one wind for them all, how could the yachts go at different speeds? These were the questions which Derek asked his father, and very soon he was being told the answer to them—an answer which was really very simple, but most important.

His father told him that it is not just the wind which decides the speed, but the way in which the yachtsmen make use of the wind. Just to be blown along by the wind is to drift, and a drifting boat will never reach the winning post, but is far more likely to run on to the rocks and sink. The Master of the boat must hoist his sails, and arrange them in such a way as to get the most help from the breeze. He must know, too, how to make the sails and rudder work together, in order to get as much power as possible from the wind. The man who had won the race did not have a special wind, but he knew how best to use what wind there was. He watched all the time, for though he could not change the wind, he could set his sails in such a way as to make it help him.

Derek's next question came when he found, to his great surprise, that the yachts had started from

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the very same steamer which marked the winning post. They had gone out in one direction, made a turn, and then come back in just the opposite direction. Had the wind changed? No; his father said it was more or less the same wind which had been blowing all the afternoon. Then how could they travel in two opposite directions with the same wind? His father answered by quoting a little verse whose words run thus: —

‘ One ship drives East,
One ship drives West
By the self-same wind that blows.
It is not the gales,
But the set of the sails
Which determines the way it goes.’

A good sailor does not have to wait until the wind blows the way he wants to go, for he knows how to use even those winds which seem to be against him, making their pressure on the sails to help him on his way. A piece of paper is carried along wherever the wind is blowing, just drifting and getting nowhere; a sailing ship would do the same if it did not have in control a wise captain, able so to set and alter his sails, and so steer his ship, as to make the winds his servants.

This brought a new question, as to how steering, as well as sails, can help the yacht to win the race. Derek's father was expecting this question, and was glad to have a chance to explain the art of 'tacking'. It is not always possible for a sailing boat to go in a straight line, so at times it has to be steered in a zigzag course, crossing from one side to another and back again, though always

moving nearer and nearer to the winning post. Many of us might lose hope when we found the wind against us, but the true sailor will not do that, for he knows that careful and patient 'tacking' to and fro will enable his ship to move slowly but steadily forward.

Derek's father was a Christian, so he went on to explain how life can be like sailing, and how, in this case, it is not seamanship that we need but faith. Without faith we shall drift; the winds of the world will drive us off the course of the will of God and wreck us on the rocks. But faith can conquer the wind instead of being swept away by it. Through Christ we can even make the contrary winds to help us on to glory.

This time Derek's father did not quote poetry, but the Word of God. "And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8. 28). Faith can lay hold of even the hard things of life, and make them help us on in the Christian race. His father also pointed out how the yacht only won the race because it had a good Master in charge of it. We can only sail against the wind if we have Christ as our Saviour, and if we hand over to Him the rudder of our lives. If we let Him take charge, He will steer us on safely. The winds may blow strongly against us; at times He may make us 'tack', but He will get us through to the winning post. Without the Lord Jesus we shall drift on to the rocks and be lost; with Him in command we can sail on to glory, even when we are sailing against the wind.

H. F.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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EDITOR : T. AUSTIN-SPARKS

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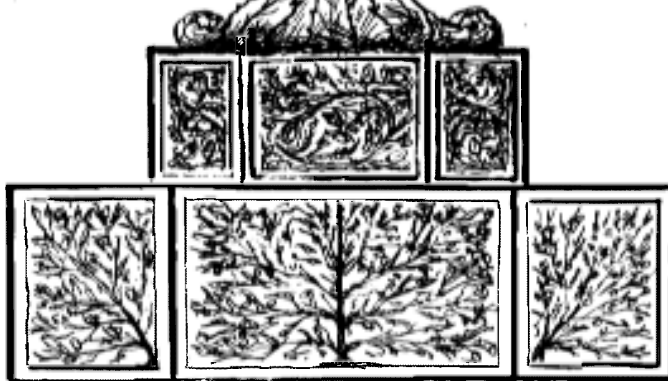
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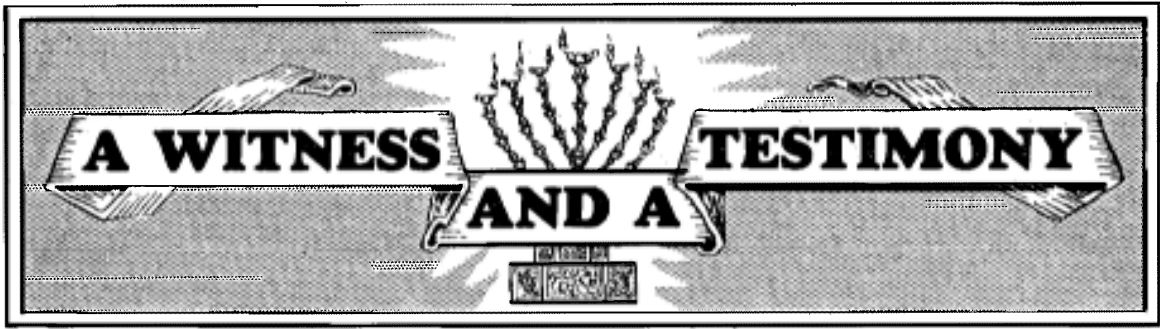
THIS MINISTRY

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

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SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER, 1954.

Vol. 23, No.5.

THE RECOVERING OF THE LORD'S TESTIMONY IN FULNESS

VII THE WARFARE

A PECULIAR WARFARE

WE come now to the warfare, the warfare related to the full testimony of the Lord or the Lord's testimony in fulness and completeness. Let me say again at once that this is a peculiar warfare. There is a warfare relating to the salvation of the unsaved, which involves all who seek to bring to the Lord those who know Him not. We know very well that it is a real battle and there is real warfare associated with that. There is that warfare which relates to being a Christian and just going on as a Christian. It is not an easy thing to continue in the way of the Lord. Most of the militant hymns that we sing have to do with the Christian life in general, and they certainly have a rightful place, because the Christian life on one side is truly a warfare. But when we have said that, we have not said all. There is a peculiar warfare connected with the Lord's ultimate purpose. The warfare becomes of a different character, is in a different world, and takes different forms, when it is related to this, and it is with that that we are occupied in our present meditation.

So, coming back to this book of Nehemiah, which, after all, is only an illustration of the spiritual and heavenly realities which we find in the New Testament, particularly in such parts as the letter to the Ephesians and the book of the Revelation, we find ourselves in the presence of a very great deal of conflict, which takes on a peculiar form because of the thing that is in view. It is that wall that is the trouble, or the cause of the trouble ;

that is to say, the recovery of a full expression of what the Lord wants concerning His people ; and that provokes a great deal of very positive and persistent antagonism of a particular character.

THE ENEMIES

If you look into this book, you will find that there are a number of people mentioned who are the sworn foes of this particular object, so we look at these before we look at their methods and the forms of their opposition. There is Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem. Who are these people? what are they? what are they doing here? how have they got here? And when you answer those questions you get very near to the heart of things as to spiritual opposition. You go back to the second book of Kings, chapter xvii, and you read from the twenty-fourth verse to the end of the chapter, and you have the whole thing explained. We will not read all those verses now, but just enough to lead us into the situation.

"And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Avva, and from Hamath and Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria and dwelt in the cities thereof. And so it was, at the beginning of their dwelling there, that they feared not the Lord: therefore the Lord sent lions among them, which killed some of them. Wherefore they spake to the king of Assyria, saying, The nations which thou hast carried away, and

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placed in the cities of Samaria, know not the manner of the God of the land. . . . Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, Carry thither one of the priests whom ye brought from thence ; and let them go and dwell there, and let him teach them the manner of the God of the land. So one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Beth-el, and taught them how they should fear the Lord. Howbeit every nation made gods of their own, and put them in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in their cities wherein they dwelt So they feared the Lord, and made unto them from among themselves priests of the high places, which sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places. They feared the Lord, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations from among whom they had been carried away” (vv. 24 – 29, 32 – 33).

These are the people with whom Nehemiah had to contend, and who sought to frustrate or hinder the continuing of this work. Let us look at them, and see what they are made of, what is the stuff of which they are made.

SUPERSTITIOUS PEOPLE

First of all, they are superstitious people. They see certain things happening and they draw the conclusion that those happenings have some background of a supernatural character. They do not know the Lord and they do not know that this thing is from the Lord, but they come to the conclusion that it has a supernatural background, it is something occult. They think if only they can find out the secrets of the supernatural realm, can be initiated into the mysteries of it, they will be able to clear up this situation, and so they proceed. They make their complaint to the king of Assyria, mark you, about the Lord, and he sends one of the priests who had been taken away from the land, and he tells them about the Lord—but the thing is so unreal, so false, in such a wrong, altogether wrong realm. You have a statement here which is almost unthinkable: “They feared the Lord, and served their own gods”. ‘Fearing the Lord’ there does not by any means mean what the fear of the Lord means amongst the Lord’s people. To fear the Lord means that He really is the Lord, and that you have become utterly and completely subject to Him as Lord. That is fearing the Lord in the true sense. But that was not true of these people. They had superstitious recognition of Him, born of fear, misfortune, difficulties, things going

wrong, but their knowledge never brought them really to the Lord. They went on serving their own gods. These are the people. That is the first thing that we take account of.

This statement, made more than once, that they feared the Lord, must have implied something. I do not know what to say about the priest or what to think about him. He evidently spoke about the Lord, about Jehovah, taught them something, but they merely received it secondhand *for their own convenience*, to save them in their troubles. So we may conclude that they used the Lord’s Name, they probably offered Him some kind of recognition. They took on a form of worship which was ostensibly to Him, but right deep down they knew not the Lord. They were using the Lord’s Name and using the Lord’s things, but were mere professors, without any real knowledge of the Lord. Their religion was an imitation, a secondhand thing, not something of the heart.

And then you notice that, in any case, they are all the time referring and deferring to Babylon. They are in servitude to the king of Babylon. And so, because of all these things, there was plenty of ground for this hostility to Nehemiah. The real test of them was their attitude toward this thing which is of primary importance to the Lord, the thing which is truest and nearest to the heart of God. How do they stand related to that? That finds them out.

NO LIVING RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD

We could have proceeded from the other end, and said, ‘Now, here we have some people, with leaders whose names are mentioned, who are hostile to this that is so important to God and to Heaven. That is their position, that is their attitude, that is their spirit. Why is it?’ The answer essentially is that they have no real relationship to the Lord. Whatever may be their profession, whatever may be their phraseology, whatever may be their pretence, their form, they themselves have really no living relationship to the Lord. That is where we begin with these people.

But we go a little further, because we have some of their leaders mentioned, and these men were outstanding men.

First of all there was Sanballat, who is called “the Horonite” (Neh. ii. 10). That simply means that he came (probably) from Beth-horon, a Samaritan city; he came from one of the towns of Samaria. He was one of those people who had been placed in the land by the king of Assyria ;

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they are described in the chapter from which we have read. He was one of them, he was after that kind.

Then you have Tobiah. You notice the pronunciation—Tobi-jah. It does not sound like that in your Bible, but that is the right pronunciation. You notice the end of his name is 'Jah', 'the Lord'. This man is ostensibly linked up with the Lord in some way. But Tobiah is an Ammonite, and you remember the word in Deut. xxiii. 3: "An Ammonite . . . shall not enter into the assembly of the Lord; even to the tenth generation shall none belonging to them enter into the assembly of the Lord for ever". And then the reason is given: "They hired against thee Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse thee". This is the background of Tobiah: something which is impinging upon God's inheritance, in a kind of link and association with Him, but really in nature inimical to the Lord. That is Tobiah, the Ammonite.

And if we get right back behind him, we remember that Ammon was one of those children of Lot through his own daughters—one of the most tragic and terrible things in the whole of the Old Testament. So that Ammon has to be numbered among those mentioned in Hebrews xii. 8: "If ye are without chastening, . . . then are ye . . . not sons"—false children, the horrible word which we refrain from using; false children, pretending to be children of God. That is Ammon through Lot: in association with God, with Abraham, but inwardly not of the pure seed of Abraham, not of the pure seed of Israel, not of the pure seed of God's people. He has his name mixed up somehow with the Lord's people, but he is not a true son—he is a false son. That is Tobiah: a fleshly association with the land, but a spiritual alienation from the Lord, and persecuting the truly spiritual. As Paul puts it: "he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit" (Gal. iv. 29); and so it is always.

We come to another man a little later on. He is Geshem, at one point called Gashmu, the same man, and he is called "the Arabian". He was either an Edomite or an Ishmaelite: whichever it was, it was very bad. You know their history, how they both of them warred against that which was spiritual. Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, dwells much upon that. This one, Ishmael, born of the bond woman, warred against him who was born of the free woman. So the flesh wars against the Spirit, the earthly against the heavenly. Or he was of Edom, of Esau. How Esau fought against Jacob! He was against that which was in the line of sovereign election; he would indeed

slay that at one point. Both of these, whether it was Esau or Ishmael, whether it was the Arabian from Edom or from Arabia, represent the conflict between the flesh and Spirit, the natural and the spiritual.

CARNAL AND FLESHLY MEN

Now you will know how full the New Testament letters are of this very thing. You find not only what I have mentioned, the hostility to the salvation of souls and the general conflict bound up with being a Christian, but you find a specific kind of assault wherever God's fuller purpose is brought into view. If Paul represents anything at all, he represents the full and ultimate purpose of God. It is through him that we have the wide, vast range of the eternal counsels and purposes concerning the Lord Jesus, and it was with assaults related to these very things that Paul was having always to contend, in peculiar ways. They did not seem to bother Peter so much. James had his difficulties, John had his difficulties, but Paul seemed to have difficulties of a peculiar kind.

Take these Judaizers, to begin with, who were always on his track. He never went anywhere but what they were soon on his heels to undo his work, to destroy his ministry, to defame his name, to undercut his apostleship. What sort of people were these Judaizers? They were not all the non-Christian Jews. If the letter to the Galatians is true, what these people were saying to the Galatian churches was: 'Christianity—yes, we allow it, we permit it, we recognise it; but after all, it is only an attachment to Judaism—it is a kind of supplementation of Judaism'. They would make it a Jewish Christianity. You remember how the Jews, the Jewish leaders, went down to Antioch to try to get the Christians to recognise the Jewish law and to incorporate it into Christianity, to observe all the Jewish rites and still be Christians. The whole letter to the Hebrews is on that matter. But here are Christians who are being tempted, not to give up the law, to depart from the law, to cease to recognise and own the law—that is not the question at all—but to add this Judaism, the law and its practices, to their Christianity, and combine the two. They were told, 'You must be circumcised, you must do this and that, observe this and that.'

Paul regarded this as subverting them from the faith. That was turning their back on Christ. The men who taught thus were Paul's real enemies. I am not saying that they were all converted men; but I am saying that they were in some measure associated with the Lord and yet were really

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inimical to Him. It was a strange mixture—taking the Lord's Name and yet being against the Lord's full purpose. That is the kind of thing that is related to the ultimate intention of the Lord. It is a peculiar kind of opposition. It comes, let us put it in a word, from carnal and fleshly men: men of influence, very often, who are actuated by natural interests and considerations. Oh, yes: they know the Lord, they will speak about the Lord, they will take certain forms of Christianity, they will be very loyal to fundamental truths of God and His Person, and so on and so on; but when it comes to this ultimate issue you find them out of sympathy and very often in hostility. They will go so far, but when the full thing comes into view they are not willing, and it is in that realm, in relation to God's full purpose, that the real and peculiar antagonism arises. Is it not strange that, when you are bent upon the whole counsel and purpose of God, you find your main opposition from Christians and Christian leaders, far more than from the world?

So it was when Nehemiah came to Jerusalem. These people were "grieved . . . exceedingly, for that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel" (Neh. ii. 10). You cannot understand that. You say, 'Well, if these people had any knowledge of the Lord at all, any recognition of the Lord, if their talk about the Lord meant anything, they would say, "Anything you can do for the people of God, we are with you"'. But they are afraid—oh, strange anomaly!—they are afraid that if the Lord has more they will have less. It is true, and we have to be very faithful about it. It is a fact; it has always been so. These are the foes.

You find much of it in the New Testament—the envy of the Jews, the jealousy of the Jews. "If we let him . . . alone . . . the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation" (John xi. 48). They are afraid of losing something that is theirs, that they have sponsored, that they have taken up. 'If this goes on, we shall lose, we shall lose people; we stand to suffer some loss if this goes on.' You know how true that is. It is a peculiar kind of fear. It is an unreasoning fear—fear that they themselves have never analysed or looked into, as to why it is they are afraid; but there it is. We know, surely we know why, if they do not. There is a mighty kingdom which, while it will withstand the salvation of the unsaved and will try to make the Christian life at all times difficult, seems to be most malignant when the fulness of Christ, or Christ coming into His inheritance, is in view. That seems to arouse something extra, of a peculiar character.

THE FORMS OF OPPOSITION

For a moment or two let us look at the forms of the opposition. We have been saying that this particular object in view provokes a peculiar kind of hostility and conflict, and it will take any form that it can to defeat God's end. In this book of Nehemiah you find a constant opposition on the part of these enemies. They will try one form of tactic at one time; then, if that does not work and they are defeated, they will swing round to another angle and try from that; and if that does not work they will change again.

'GRIEF'

So you find in the first place that they were very "grieved" that a man had come. But that does not get very far, does not do much damage. We must look behind their great grief. Why were they grieved? Well, here again it would be such a perplexing thing, if there were a modicum of concern for the Lord's interests. Nehemiah explains his motive for doing this work of rebuilding the wall: "that we be no more a reproach" (Neh. ii. 17). The existing state of things means that the Lord's people are under a reproach. Dishonour rests upon the Church—that is what it amounts to; the world does not think much of it; the glory of the Lord is veiled and there is reproach. You might think that these people, if they had any sincerity of motive, would at least want to remove that reproach.

But there you get to the heart of things, because Satan's one object, as we said on a previous occasion, has always been to bring reproach upon the Name of the Lord. Always, by any means, along any line, if he can defame the Name of the Lord which rests upon the Lord's people, he will do it. They were very grieved that there was someone seeking to remove the reproach of the Lord which rested upon His people. A terrible thing, that. Paul got himself into a lot of trouble for that very reason. He tried to clear up that reproachful situation at Corinth, but there were those in Corinth who turned on him, who said all kinds of things about him.

SCORN AND RIDICULE

Then they turned to scorn. "What do these feeble Jews? . . . if a fox go up, he shall break down their stone wall" (Neh. iv. 2, 3)—despising, scornfully trying to make out that after all this does not amount to anything, it is not worth taking note of—don't take it too seriously! Some of the Lord's people cannot stand up to that sort of

thing. They just go to pieces under it. You have only got to try and transfer to them an inferiority complex, and that has done it—down they go. But not Nehemiah. Nehemiah knows the reproach is not levelled at him and his fellow-workers—it is levelled at the Lord; and he says here: ‘O Lord, You take note of Tobiah’ (iv. 4, 5). He passes that back to the Lord. But this action and attitude of despising is a very real one, a very real and subtle art of the Devil to try and bring home the idea that you are trying to be something which you cannot be, you are trying to do something that does not count for anything at all. All that you are doing, all the labour, all the suffering, all the cost: after all, what does it amount to? There is nothing in it! You will have your day and pass on and the whole thing will fizzle out!

If you take that on, you will not go beyond the first stages of this whole business of recovering the Lord’s testimony. Though it is not right to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think or to give an undue importance to the ministry committed to us, if we have seen the heavenly vision of what God in purpose is after, we are clothed with a dignity that is not our own. Nehemiah afterwards was able to say, with true dignity born of the deepest humility: “Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being such as I, would go into the temple to save his life?” (Neh. vi. 11). That is a dignity that is more than his personally. He says: “I am doing a great work”. It is the dignity of a great calling. It is the great work, not what we are in ourselves, that gives the dignity.

WRATH

The wall is now coming on, things are coming to an end and the finish is in view, and now the enemies are very wroth. There is much significance in that kind of ridicule. The fact is the enemy is deeply stirred. This wrath means that Satan recognises that here is something that he should take account of. Whatever he may put on outwardly, underneath he is aware that there is something here that is going to shake his kingdom to its foundations. Remember all that, if a day of wrath breaks out! It is an indication—it is really complimentary. It is an acknowledgment that there is something here worth while. You cannot explain the Devil’s wrath except that he must recognise something even more than we recognise. There must be something that matters to him.

These enemies were very wroth, and out of their wrath they conspired to come and fight. But this became known to Nehemiah, and he took special

measures. He armed the people who were working, not only with a trowel in one hand, but with a sword in the other. When the enemy’s plans are known, half the battle is yours. So the conspiracy failed.

SUBTERFUGE

The opposition took many other forms. You know about the letter, “Let us meet together in one of the villages in the plain of Ono” (Neh. vi. 2), ‘and talk this over’. Very cunning. Nehemiah is alive to it: they meant to do him harm, they meant to assassinate him—that is what it amounted to. And he said: “I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down”. That failed, but the enemy is subtle. He will try to get us in some way to a place where we compromise, come to some agreement with him, find some terms where he can get an advantage, where we can be put out. The Apostle Paul concentrates all his great argument on spiritual warfare on that very point. “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph. vi. 11)—against his subterfuges.

MISREPRESENTATION

Then misrepresentation. ‘It is reported that you intend in the building of the wall to make yourself king, and to have it proclaimed that there is a king in Jerusalem, and you are appointing prophets to preach of you’ (Neh. vi. 6, 7). When the enemy tries that line it is sometimes very disconcerting. It is a horrible suggestion. ‘You are trying to make a name for yourself, to get a position for yourself; all this, after all, is only a secret motive of yours to get notoriety, to be something and to do something that will make the world take note of you’. If you have any meekness at all, that shaft is a very dangerous, cruel one—God only knows what it costs. The enemy tries to impute a false motive to all your labours. ‘After all, you only have your own ends in view, trying to do something, to make a name’.

Yes, the enemy will stop at nothing—lies or slander. The answer is, ‘What is the truth about this? is this true?’ After all, let us stand back from these lies of the enemy, and say, ‘Is it true? Have I anything to set over against that?’ Nehemiah’s reply was: “There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart”. Our answer is, ‘These imputations are not true! If I had been seeking my own ends, I would have taken a very different course from this. If I had wanted to do something grand and great, that everybody would accept and recognise

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and acknowledge as a great piece of work, I should not have taken this course'. We can reply with Nehemiah: "There are no such things"—it is lies and slander.

INTIMIDATION

And then there is intimidation. Here is a man to whose house Nehemiah went, Nehemiah, with all his uncompromising spirit, seems to have been a very friendly soul, and he went to see this man one day in a friendly sort of way. This fellow feigned to be his friend and to be very concerned for him, and said, 'We had better go into the temple and shut the door, because they will come and kill you'. But Nehemiah retorts: 'Should I flee to the house of God to save my life? I will not go in'. This was a false friend, after all; right in close proximity, a Judas. This was such a one as would say to the Lord Jesus: "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall never be unto thee". Although those words came audibly through Peter—none other than Peter—the Lord immediately says: "Get thee behind me, Satan: . . . thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men" (Matt. xvi. 22, 23). Coming through a friendliness is a suggestion of the enemy to create fear. Nehemiah puts his finger right on the spot—"they would make us afraid". If the enemy can get fear in, we are finished.

TIREDNESS

You read the book, and you can see all this from the outside. And then comes this from the inside: "The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed" (Neh. iv. 10). The people got tired, got weary. Perhaps there is no greater enemy to going on with the testimony than tiredness. You know something about that. Even when you get physically tired, what a tremendous force that can be to discourage. Does not the enemy rush right in on tiredness? Let us get mentally tired, where we feel we can no longer cope with things mentally—and what a perilous position that is.

"The strength of the bearers of burdens" went, and that was a perilous moment, and Nehemiah had to take special measures in the presence of

tiredness. Oh, be on your guard. It is not just that the enemy makes you tired. Sometimes he does: I think sometimes a good deal of tiredness is due to his wearing out, his drive. But sometimes he gets us to do a lot of unwise things that we should not do, so that we bring tiredness on ourselves, and he thus gets an advantage to himself. But whether that be the case or not, always remember that the enemy will take hold of tiredness to stop you going on, to destroy your testimony. It is a perilous moment. You need to take special precautions in the moment of tiredness.

THE NEED FOR WATCHFUL,
INTELLIGENT PRAYER

This is the warfare. We have just entered a little into the nature of it, the forms that it takes, but you notice that the salvation of the whole situation was due very largely to close watchfulness. If Sanballat and Tobiah and all the rest had their secret informants of all that was going on inside, and they did, Nehemiah also had his information coming through. He kept very closely in touch with what was happening in the enemy's ranks, and his close watchfulness, coupled with his persistent prayerfulness, was the secret of the victory. "Watching unto prayer" (Eph. vi. 18). It is not enough to pray—we must pray intelligently. We must pray with information, with knowledge, with discernment, with perception, for these things are the strength of effective prayer.

So the victory and the completion of the testimony were largely due to this watchfulness unto prayer, seeking at every point to guard against what the enemy was doing, in a suitable way. That is a subject in itself. Here, truly, is a warfare! The fact is, that, when God is seeking to do a new thing in recovering something more of His whole purpose, this is fraught with intense and peculiar conflict. The conflict may take many different forms, but the object of all is one—to make the work cease.

The Lord keep us moving on to the end.

T. A-S.

“GASHMU SAITH IT”

IT is amazing that so many people acquire reputations as oracles merely by circulating baseless rumours. There is a very suggestive word in that treasury of practical wisdom, the book of Nehemiah, in the sixth chapter and the sixth verse. The enemies of the Jews sent a letter to Nehemiah, “wherein was written, It is reported among the heathen, and *Gashmu saith it*, that thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words.”

God's builders must always expect that their motives will be impugned. Every man who has been used of God to build some part of the walls of Jerusalem has been charged with egotism, with a desire to exalt himself and make himself king. He may have received the clearest commission from God to do the work in which he is engaged, and may be confirmed in his conviction of duty, as Nehemiah was, by “the hand of my God which was upon me”; but all that will avail nothing to silence the criticism of Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian. God's builders have always to face the tongue of misrepresentation and slander. We have sometimes thought it is the Devil's device to occupy the people of God by tempting them to spend their time in refuting his slanders.

Nehemiah was informed that certain things were “reported” about him. Thus do the sharp

tongues of the wicked endeavour to strike to the heart of God's faithful ones: “They say ‘everybody believes’; ‘it is the general opinion’; ‘it is reported’!” In this way an attitude and an atmosphere is created; and usually there is someone to stamp with his personal authority that which is “reported”, and to accelerate the speed of the circulating rumours: “And *Gashmu saith it*”.

So far as we are able to determine, *Gashmu* served no useful purpose in the world except to credential the enemy's slanders. “*Gashmu saith it*”. *Gashmu* has wrecked many a church. We have seen people become important messengers of what “*Gashmu saith*”—‘Of course, I do not know the facts myself; I am not on the inside of matters; I am not taken into counsel—but when Mr. So-and-so says it, you may be sure there is something in it.’ Which being interpreted is to say, “It is reported . . . and *Gashmu saith it*”! Since *Gashmu* has so long been vocal, it is perhaps vain even to hope that he will cease from his talking. But what shall we set over this irritant, that “*Gashmu saith it*”? The best of all answers is a “Thus saith the Lord”. Let a man be commissioned by a word from heaven, he will then be able to go on with his work until all the breaches in the walls are stopped. He will be able to do all in spite of what “*Gashmu saith*.”

SELECTED

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Brookline, Mass. \$10.00 ; Brooklyn, N.Y. \$5.00 ;			(American)
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THE EXCELLENCY OF CHRIST

"Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ" (Philippians iii. 8).

PEOPLE whose lives are shadowed by regrets are always to be pitied. The apostle Paul had no regrets. Others might lament that they had sacrificed their career or their friends for something or somebody, but he never thought in terms of sacrifice when he looked back at what might have been. When once he had found out how excellent Christ was, nothing else seemed nearly so important or precious. Far from regretting that he had given up all for Christ, he never ceased to thank God that he had done so.

EXCELLENCY IN THE REALM OF
RIGHTEOUSNESS

Paul was a man who from his earliest days had always been seeking excellence. He wanted the very best. For many years he sought that excellence in himself, trying very hard to be perfect in his own righteousness; trying, but never succeeding, for in spite of his great efforts he could find no satisfaction in his attainments. Sometimes he felt pleased with himself, but at others he was depressed with the fear that after all there was something that he lacked. If he searched the Scriptures to see if there was something more that he ought to do, of course there was—there always is. Only a superficial man, who is too easily pleased, can believe that he is really doing all that he should, and even he has no means of compensating for past failures or blotting them out. Saul of Tarsus was not a superficial man; he was in deadly earnest. For him, then, it must have been a constant source of disappointment to know that he could never reach perfection and that no amount of effort on his part could make him the man he knew he ought to be.

Then one day God, in His mercy, showed Saul where he could find true excellence. To him it was a surprising discovery and a revolutionary one. He gave up trying to be righteous then. He ceased his efforts to be spiritual. What a miserable life it is when we are trying to be spiritual! Moreover we somehow convey this air of misery to others and

make them feel that it really isn't worth it. Saul's dissatisfaction gave place to great joy when he discovered that God freely offered him the perfect righteousness of Christ, as a gift: that he no longer had to try to be content with his own imperfect efforts, but could possess as his very own the excellency of Christ's righteousness. Never again would he have to fear failure, for there is no failure in Christ. Never again would he have to make comparisons of his own efforts with those of others, wondering if he could manage to surpass their standard and so have the doubtful satisfaction of feeling better than his fellows. This comparative righteousness—being rather better than those around us—brings no real comfort. Happily the righteousness of Christ is not comparative. It is excellent—it is better than the best. Christ is the sum total not only of all that we would like to be, but of all that God could ever wish us to be. He could not be better, for He is perfect. When Paul found that there was a righteousness like that to be had, he gladly let go of all else to possess it. His own religious efforts, his good opinion of himself, his reputation before others, his wealth, his status: if these were a hindrance to enjoying such an excellency, then he would gladly discard them all, for they were not gains but losses. Who ever would seek to find satisfaction in his own imperfections when he could freely possess the perfection of Christ?

Saul did not begin his Christian life by resolving to adopt Christian doctrines, nor did he fall into the error of basing his happiness on his own ability to copy other Christians, or even to imitate Christ Himself. He realised that, in the Lord Jesus, the Father had found His full and final satisfaction. All that God now wanted was that Saul should freely appropriate the same excellency, find his rest in it, and begin to prove its value as an inward power in his own life.

EXCELLENCY IN THE REALM OF LOVE

Saul had also sought excellency in his friendships and associations. He moved in high circles, and aspired to move in even higher ones. He liked to be with the best people, and to have them as his friends. He wanted to be well thought of, to have a good standing and close friendship with those who mattered most. He liked to be liked—and

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who of us does not? But it seems certain that as he pursued this course he found that the friendship of the world left him restless and dissatisfied.

Then the day came when he found the supreme blessing of knowing Christ and the excellency of His love. From that moment he forsook all lesser loves. He counted the friendship of this world and the attractions of its society well lost, if in exchange he had found a place in the love of Christ. He did not mourn over the past or regret what he had given up, for he had now found something so much better, the excellency of the love of Christ.

It was an absolute love. It had led his Saviour to lay down His own life in order to redeem one who was doing his utmost to be His worst enemy. No wonder, then, that the apostle found a new incentive to pour out his own life in sacrificial devotion. How inadequate and unworthy had been his motives when he was only trying to please men and to be rewarded by their favour! How full of compromise life can be when we are governed by the thought of what people will say or think of us! How erratic is our course, when we are looking this way and that to be sure that men do not misunderstand us, fearing their criticism or longing for their praise. To Paul, the love of Christ was so excellent that it formed a master passion in his life. Other considerations which used to weigh so heavily with him had now ceased to matter. It was not that he was indifferent to others, or lacking in appreciation of them, but rather that everything else had to be subordinated to the one purpose of pleasing the one who loved him so much.

In the light of such love, Paul felt a constant urge to get to know his Lord better. It could never be enough just to have a superficial satisfaction with his first experience of the love of Christ. It is true that life had many good things to offer, but these were nothing compared to an increasing intimacy with Christ. It is a sad thing when Christians imagine that they know it all, and allow other interests to draw them aside from the one great pursuit of a deeper knowledge of the Lord. Paul realised how small was his apprehension of the love of Christ, and was all the more determined to let nothing stand in the way of his learning more of it.

EXCELLENCY IN THE REALM OF POWER

Furthermore there is excellence in the realm of power. Hitherto Saul had exerted his own strength—and it was not inconsiderable. He had also sought and found support and authority from the great in this world. The very day in which he met

Christ, he was intent on showing how energetic he could be, and his energy was backed by letters of authority which bore weighty names. Within his own nation none dare withstand him; he felt equal to them all. It was not that Saul had never tasted power, for he had; but in coming to Christ he came into the sphere of an altogether different kind of authority, which far surpassed anything he had previously dreamed of. We need not worry if we lack human power or earthly authority. This man who had them, cast them away as worthless rubbish, once he had discovered the blessedness of fellowship with the one who has all authority in Heaven and on earth. It is the excellency of Christ's power which is meant to characterize our lives.

The power which Judaism wielded was a power to exclude, a power to shut men out. Intolerant of all with which it did not agree or which it could not understand, it hunted men down, denounced and accused them, excluded them. That was all it could do. The power of Christ, however, was a superior one, for it brought men in, even sinful and unworthy men. It pursued men—only to pour out love upon them. Its message was one, not of accusation, but of freedom from condemnation by the Blood of the Cross; it did not shut men out because they were unfit, but offered to make them fit in order that with boldness they might enter in. All the wealth and learning of Paul's old world could only provide a Beautiful Gate, outside which a poor lame man might sit and beg. Yet the humble disciples of Christ, with neither learning nor wealth, could speak a simple word of power in the Name of Jesus which could set such a man on his feet, and send him entering joyfully into the Temple, walking and leaping and praising God (Acts iii. 8).

Saul and his colleagues only had power to put men into prison. Christ's power was superior, for He could bring them out. Once and again in those early days, the prison doors were opened and the imprisoned saints set free. This was indeed power, something with which the rulers themselves could not cope. But far more than material prisons were broken open: for men whose souls were in bondage, men who had long been enslaved to their own fears and passions, came to find a full deliverance from the dominion of Satan. Saul himself, like the man in the Gospels possessed with a legion of demons, had proved the authority of Christ to speak the word of release which would bring him—"clothed and in his right mind"—to sit docilely at the feet of the Jesus whom he had once so hated. Such a man cannot be seduced by the offer

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of earthly titles or positions among men, nor can he be frightened by those who claim to possess them. All lesser powers are seen to be feeble when once a man has tasted of the exceeding greatness of Christ's resurrection power.

Yes, that is where the excellency lies. It is *resurrection* power. "The weakness of God is stronger than men" (I Cor. i. 25). God does not begin until man has finished. His power is the power of resurrection, coming into circumstances which speak of hopelessness and impossibility—as it were the very death of all human efforts—and showing the excellency of His mighty power. He seeks such circumstances; He needs them; He will, if necessary, wait for them. It may have taken some time for Paul to realise how his own energies and efforts could hinder the Lord and get in His way. He doubtless felt, as we often do, that he could contribute something by his own strength or wisdom to assist the Lord's working. A time came, however, when he had to realise that this was not so, that his supposed gains were really losses, his helps hindrances. When he had learned this lesson, he was led into a life of great power and fruitfulness, for his ministry became marked not by his good efforts and intentions but by the excellency of Christ's risen power. It is only by learning to be crucified that we can prove the reality of the power of God.

EXCELLENCY IN THE REALM OF PURPOSE

Saul was an ambitious man. He wanted the best and was willing to plan and strive that he might reach it. Yet he was, in fact, moving in the opposite direction: the harder he tried to serve God the more he became an antagonist of Christ. For let us make no mistake about it: God's goal is always Christ. If we are striving for any other objective, seeking satisfaction in ourselves or in others, or trying to build up something of importance among men, then we are failing to appreciate what God's purpose is. It is even possible that, like Paul in his misguided zeal, we are working against the Lord's purpose even while we seek to serve Him.

God has one great all-inclusive purpose, and that is to fill everything with the glory of His dear Son. There were many good things which Paul might have done, some so good that he might even have felt it worth while devoting his whole life to

them. In Christ, however, he had found the excellent, the surpassing, and for that he gladly counted all else but loss. He saw that God's intentions toward mankind were not just of general kindness or helpfulness: so far as He was concerned the one urgent matter was that Christ should be given a place in their lives. Nothing else was good enough; this was the one thing that mattered. If they failed to live in the good of Christ within, then all else was vain. For this one purpose, then, Paul put himself unreservedly at the Lord's disposal. He was willing to endure any suffering, if by it men could be brought to a living knowledge of Christ. And, until we come to the same position, we, likewise, cannot know true excellence.

The apostle realised, though, that such a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus was not the end of his ministry, but only the beginning. The Father's intention concerning the believer was more than an introduction to Christ and more than a commitment to Christ: it was that the whole life should be possessed by Christ and changed into His likeness. Paul not only sought converts, he sought converts who should be entering by experience into the excellency of Christ. He knew that in eternity this would be the one thing that mattered, and he made it his business in all his ministry to labour for eternity. The great issue then would not be concerned with the hundred and one things which seem to matter in Christian life and work now. The one great question would be: How Christlike had they become? This, then, became the master passion of the apostle Paul, so far as he had any part that he could play: to "present every man perfect in Christ" (Col. i. 28).

And he knew that this ministry was inextricably bound up with his own apprehension of Christ. Far more than we realise, God is concerned with His great end of conforming us to Christ. To what purpose is our service to Him or to others if we are not growing more Christlike even as we serve? By all means let us devote all our powers to the Lord's service, but let us beware of making service the end, for, so far as God is concerned, the only satisfactory end is Christ. And we need not wonder whether it is necessary to be so downright as Paul was, for we may be sure that it is. Only those who are prepared to go right through with the experience of counting all things loss for Him can be sure of enjoying the excellency of the knowledge of Christ.

H. F.

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THE MAN GOD HAS ORDAINED

I. GOD'S STANDARD

Reading: Revelation i. 1 - 18.

"... he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness in THE MAN WHOM HE HATH ORDAINED; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (*Acts xvii. 31, marg.*).

IT will be with that little phrase, "he will judge the world... in the man whom he hath ordained", as our key, that we shall consider this wonderful revelation of the Lord Jesus which forms our preliminary reading. "The man whom he hath ordained." Let us look for a few minutes at one or two of those words.

Firstly, "He hath appointed a day": that is, He has fixed, or established, a day. Into that statement the whole book of the Revelation is gathered. When John said: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day", he said more explicitly: "I became in the Spirit", or, "I found myself in spirit, in the day of the Lord". God "hath set forth, or fixed, a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness".

And then, "in the man whom he hath ordained". That word "ordained" is a very interesting word. It is the Greek word from which we get our English word 'horizon': it means, basically, to set bounds or limits, to mark out a defined or determined realm. In this passage, the Man is the realm, the marked out limit, the defined sphere in which God will judge the world. It is suggestive that the phrase in the original Greek is, literally, "in the man". (Compare I Cor. vi. 2: "if the world shall be judged in you".) Everything is to be brought for its judgment into the realm of what this Man is. Everything and everyone will be judged according to the significance of the Man whom He has ordained.

We shall come back to that presently, but it may be helpful just to have said that much as to these two words. There is a day, and a very crowded day, coming, as this book of the Revelation shows, and it is the day of a Man: that is, in which everything is to be tested by that Man, according to that Man—the Man whom He hath ordained.

Now we come to this book of the Revelation, and to this first chapter in particular. I say no new

thing when I say that the books of Genesis and Revelation bound the history of this present world. One is the book of the beginnings; the other is the book of the endings. The one is the first, the other is the last, and it is there that the Lord Jesus, the Man whom God has ordained, embraces that whole history, and says: "I am the first and the last", "the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end". 'I am the Genesis and I am the Revelation. I am the beginning, the Alpha, and I am the end, the Omega'. This whole history moves by phases, shorter and longer, and the first phase, which, so far as its record is concerned, is gathered into a very short portion of Scripture, the first two chapters of the book of Genesis, ends with a man and the tree, the tree of life. From that point another phase commences. At that point what is called 'the fall' takes place, and an entirely new phase begins. The first phase brings us to the man and the tree; the last phase, in the book of the Revelation, brings us—in the first chapter to the Man, in the end of the book to the tree. These two things are governing all history. What they signify embodies and embraces the whole of the history of this world. We shall confine our attention, at this time, to the man.

THE CONCEPTION OF MAN

There are several things that we have to note about the man. First of all, there is God's *conception* of man. What is that conception? In the words so familiar to us, it is: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness". So the conception of man is God-likeness. That is all-governing with God; that is all-governing in all God's dealings with man. It is that which comes out pre-eminently in the book of the Revelation as the consummation of God's dealings with man. That is the thing which lies behind all these movements of God in relation to man—God-likeness. If we miss everything else, let us hold on to this: because in this is found, and out of this proceeds, everything else. God's concern with man is *His likeness*.

God is not concerned in the first place, or in any very important way, with doctrine, with teaching, with Christian work, with our many-sided activities. These all may follow and have a place, but

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they are all very subordinate. They have a far smaller place with God than they have with us. With God they are only related things, they are side-issues. With Him, the one all-important and all-inclusive thing is His own likeness. What matters to Him about all our teaching, about all our gatherings, about all our works and activities, is the measure in which His likeness appears as the result. Nothing else counts. We do not gather together for teaching, doctrine, 'conference meetings'. Let this be established at the outset. We gather together, if we are in line with the Divine desire, in order that there may be in us more likeness to God, as He judges everything in the Man whom He has ordained—in the Man, not by the Man; in the Man, in what that Man is.

That is the conception of God. Let us ask the Lord very much that He will lay strongly upon our hearts, and keep it ever before us, that the thing that matters, from A to Z, from Alpha to Omega, from beginning to end, is that God's conception and purpose, in giving us a being at all, is *His likeness*—an expression of Himself. This must be an adjusting factor in our mentality, in our conversation, in our teaching. We must not be taken up with efforts to get the Church according to a certain technique and order and conception. Our message must not be the message of the Body of Christ as a truth, as a doctrine, as a procedure. All these things come within this encircling conception. What is the Body of Christ for, if it is not to express what Christ is like? What is the Church for, if it is not to manifest the presence of Christ? This must adjust our thoughts, our ideas, our teaching and our talk. The thing about which we have to be concerned is—not this and that aspect of truth—but: How much is the Lord seen, recognised, understood, as to what He is like?

You know that that is the key to the Word of God. The whole Word of God is occupied with this: What is God like? On one side there is the constant implication, or at least inference: 'God is *not* like that, God is *not* like that, God is *not* like that—but God *is* like this'. In the days of the Lord Jesus, the whole idea of the most religious people—the Jews themselves, and all the Jewish rulers—was a false conception of God; and the Lord Jesus in their midst was, by His very presence, His very nature, as well as by His teaching and His activity, saying, 'No, God is not like that; God is like this'. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John xiv. 9). And see how He clashed with popular religious ideas as to what God was like. Yes: 'Not technique, not truth, doctrine, but "our likeness"', says the Lord.

THE PRINCIPLE OF MAN

The next thing is what I am going to call the *principle* of man. What is the principle we find when God has made man and set him forth? The principle is that the man is a standard man: he represents or sets forth a standard. He is not just a being, but he is a *kind* of being. He is not just holding an office; he is a *person*. God did not make a drawing of His thoughts or paint a picture of His conceptions; He made a man. He did not make a working machine to set forth the operation of certain laws; He made a man. And that is a standard to which God would work, which God would impress upon His creation, His universe: that what that man is should be found, as it were, emanating or issuing forth and pressing upon everything, and that everything should be conformed to that man. As you see the works of that man and the expressions of that man's being, you should know what kind of a man he is: just as, in every sphere of life, in a home, in a garden, in a business, if there is a man about—not a feeble caricature, but a *man!*—you find that that particular sphere, in which the man exercises his influence, bears the impress of that man. You can trace the man here—see what kind of a man lives here, works here, moves here. You know the man by the impress of his hand. He is, in his sphere, the standard of things.

And that is a principle in man. There is a principle about man that he is a standard set forth by God: everything is to take the impress of that man, as a standard; is to come up to a certain level. That man must not let things down. That man must not allow things to lose character, to lose form, to become a shapeless mass. He must see to it that everything comes up to that express full thought that is found in the man God has made.

THE VOCATION OF MAN

"Let us make man . . . and let them have dominion" over this and that—over all things. The *vocation* of man, according to God's intention, is dominion, government. And when you come, in the light of the whole history of man, to look into this vocation, this governmental idea of God as to man, you find that it has three aspects.

It begins with himself. That is quite clear, as to Adam. It is quite clear all the way along that God holds man, in the first place, responsible for the government of himself. Everything else proceeds from that. All that the New Testament has to say about self-control—a poor translation of the

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word—is just that. It all begins with government of himself.

Then, in the second place, it extends to the world—and, mark you, man's government of the world depends upon his government of himself. It extends to the government of the world. But do not get false mentalities about that. Government of the world is not temporal government, to begin with. It was with Adam, and it will be eventually, but this is a spiritual thought. We remember all that is said by John about "he that overcometh the world" (I John v. 4, 5). This Man whom God has ordained said: "I have overcome the world" (John xiv. 33). We will not take time just now to define and explain what is meant by "the world" in this connection, but perhaps it is not necessary. Do you find the world something to be overcome? Is there not a spirit—is there not an order, a nature of things, a way, a mentality, a disposition—that we speak of as 'the world', 'the way of the world'? Yes, and you know what a great force that is to be overcome. It is a spiritual thing, dominion over the world; and there will be no government of the world in any more literal sense, later, if there is no government of the world in a spiritual sense now.

Then, in the third place, this government reaches to the heavens. It is found to affect, to be related to, spiritual forces beyond man—outside of man and outside of the world. It is in that realm that this government finds its ultimate and supreme expression.

There is no need for me at this point to take you into the New Testament with those three connections: government as to our own souls, as to the spirit of the world around us, and as to the forces of evil, of darkness, working through both. That will probably come out more fully as we go on.

THE TESTING OF MAN

The fourth thing is the *testing* of man. Here we have to repeat that man was not just an official, but a morally responsible person, and the whole issue of his moral responsibility was the question of *faithfulness*: faithfulness to God, faithfulness to the Divine conception, faithfulness to the standard God had set up as to Himself. There are many aspects of self which are forbidden, but there are some aspects of self which are right, and self-respect is one of them—that right kind of self-respect which marked Nehemiah: "Should such a man as I flee?" (Nehemiah vi. 11). That is moral dignity, and man was tested as to his faithfulness to God—faithfulness to himself in the highest sense, to the dignity of his own being in God's

thought, from Heaven's standpoint. It was not self-importance—you know what I mean—but faithfulness to his vocation to govern for God. Faithfulness was the ground of testing.

And with a view to that testing, you can see the play of spiritual forces: the permission of those forces of evil, of Satan, the tempter, the adversary, the deceiver, to come and play upon this man to test him as to his faithfulness. Note that it is the play of *spiritual* forces, through the *world*, upon the *soul*, regarding the *vocation*, involving the destiny. I want you to get those phases. *The play of spiritual forces*: in the testing of man unto his approving, unto his establishing. The play of spiritual forces *through the world*: it is through the world, in the first place, that you and I will find our testing. That world is a very comprehensive world. *Upon our souls*: our reasoning, our desiring and our deciding. Through the world, upon our souls, *regarding our vocation*: to rob us of our Divinely-appointed governmental function, to rob God of His intention to make man His ruler in the creation and in the spiritual world.

Yes, it is that vocation that God has in view. Do not forget it. Do not let the point be missed through my imperfect way of expressing it. I have to put it in this way, but do not look at that—do not just hear it as words, as things said. Do you not see what the enemy is after, as he plays with his evil forces upon your souls through this world? If God did not have this meaning always in view, He would shut you up in convents and monasteries, He would keep you in conferences all the days of your life; He would set up hostels and say, 'Live there! Never go out of doors; look at the world from behind a grill!'—but He does not. He puts you in the world, and you are all the time wanting to get out of it into 'spiritual work', into 'spiritual service', to have a Bible everlastingly under your arm or on your desk. But He drives you into the world, and there you are, under testing by the forces of evil—by His permission—in relation to spiritual government: of yourself first, then of the world spiritually, and then of the spiritual forces behind the world. That is what God is doing.

THE DESTINY OF MAN

The fifth and last thing here is the *destiny* of man. Our destiny is all involved—and what a destiny it is! What is it? The destiny is *glory*. Perhaps that does not help you very much. It sounds abstract. What is glory? First of all, in its essence, it is the shining forth of the Divine nature: it is what the Bible calls immortality or incorruption.

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Christ "brought life and incorruption to light" (II Timothy i. 10); that is glory—where there is nothing left that is corrupt or can be corrupted. That is the destiny of man.

And when it is like that, when there is the shining forth of the Divine nature, it is a most potent thing. You and I have not grasped the tremendous significance of some of the statements about the appearing of our Lord. Saul of Tarsus went down, smitten blind, as one paralysed or dead, when this 'Man whom He had ordained' appeared before him on the way to Damascus. John "fell at his feet as one dead" (Rev. i. 17), and the Scripture declares that by the manifestation of His coming or presence He will bring to nought the lawless one (II Thess. ii. 8). This is not just light, a blaze of light. This is a nature—terrible, unendurable: to wickedness, to sin, to evil, destructive; but, for the man after His heart, incorruption, glory. We shall be glorified together with Him (Romans viii. 17). Even our bodies will be bodies of glory, because no corruption is found in that resurrection body. "Conformed unto the body of his glory" (Phil. iii. 21).

The destiny is the thing that is involved in God's permission to the enemy to put us through severe testing. It is that that is bound up with our being put by the Lord where we are in this world—not only as to location, but as to atmosphere, in a condition of things so inimical to God, so unlike God, where Satan has his power.

EVERYTHING RECOVERED IN CHRIST

Now all this—the conception, the principle, the vocation, the testing, and the destiny—is what we have in the first chapter of the book of the Revelation. You notice the one designation given to Christ in that chapter is "son of man". "I turned to see . . . I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto a son of man" (vs. 12, 13). Here we have *the Man*, the perfect Man, presented, embodying all that of which we have just been speaking. He embodies God's conception of Divine likeness in a Man. He embodies the principle of man, as a standard—God will judge the world in that Man. In virtue of what He is He will bring everything to judgment. It is all being judged, not only by Him but in Him, by what He is. Here He is presented as the standard.

Again, here is the Man in full possession and exercise of His vocation of government. Further, He has been tested and approved. Tested in obedience unto death, yea, the death of the Cross—"I became dead"; approved—"Behold, I am alive

for evermore". Let us recall Acts xvii. 31 again: "He will judge the world in righteousness in the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead". He was subjected to the test of ultimate faithfulness, an obedience unto death; He was approved, after utter testing—God raised Him from the dead. Here is "the Man". And, lastly, the Man is in the glory. He has reached His destiny—glory. This is what we have in this chapter: a Man—the Man—answering to God's thought, of God's appointment.

In the fall it was all this that was lost. The conception—Divine likeness—was lost. The principle—the Divine standard—was lost. The vocation—government—was lost. The approving through trial was lost. The glory was lost. But in the Man it is all won back, it is all recovered. And I close here by just putting my finger upon the glorious significance of some of John's words in this chapter. "Jesus Christ . . . the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood; and he made us to be a kingdom, . . . priests unto his God and Father; to him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever" (vs. 5, 6). Remember, John wrote that prelude, that introduction to his wonderful book, after he had received the whole revelation. He says, in effect: "I am going to write down all He has shown me: but oh, in the light of all He has shown me—"unto him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood; and . . . made us to be a kingdom, priests unto his God and Father . . .!"

What is the significance? All that was lost is recovered for us by that love and by that Blood. He "loveth us". He by His Blood has "loosed us" from all that came in by the fall. In Himself He has recovered it all, secured it all. Now He is the representative One, the Son of Man, and

'In Him the tribes of Adam boast
More blessings than their father lost'.

That is why John was so exultant. He might have put this at the end, but he puts it at the beginning. Terrible things are going to be revealed, but he begins with a shout of exultation. It is a terrible thing that has happened, but it is a glorious thing that has followed: therefore—"unto him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood; and he made us to be a kingdom, . . . priests unto his God and Father; to him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever".

"In the man whom he hath ordained." You

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see how Christ compasses everything, dominates everything, determines everything, becomes that realisation of God's original conception and purpose in man, and the standard to which God by His Spirit is working—yes, actually working in us,

and using the very forces of evil through this world to do it. There is no God-likeness to be attained unto except in the midst of a hostile world. The greatest victory of all is to walk in the midst of Sodom and Gomorrah in white raiment.

T. A-S.

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

COOLING OFF

I have a Laodicean Thermos Flask. No, it is not an antique, and it was not dug up from the ruins of an ancient city. As a matter of fact it is quite modern and looks very much like the others which people buy in shops or take on picnics. It looks like them, but it is not. It is a sham. It doesn't work.

If there is one thing which I want when I am tired and thirsty, it is either a drink which is nice and hot, or else one which is very cold and fresh. That is why I bought my Thermos, for such flasks are meant to keep drinks either hot or cold. But there must be something wrong with this one, for the drinks it gives do not quench the thirst; they are neither hot nor cold, but only tepid. There is nothing that can be seen wrong with it. The outside is as good as ever, and the inside shows no signs of being broken. There is some hidden trouble, though, which makes it useless to its owner.

In some ways Christians are rather like spiritual Thermos Flasks: they are meant to bring joy and refreshment to their Lord as well as to the thirsty ones around them. A Thermos is specially made to keep drinks hot or cold. It cannot heat the liquids, but if a hot drink is put into it, the flask can keep it at the same temperature, not letting it cool off as it would otherwise do. Even if a flask of hot tea were put out in the snow, the tea would still stay hot. Or, if you like, it will keep the drink cold. It cannot freeze the liquid, but if an icy drink is put into it, then it will keep it cold, no matter how hot the day may be. If a Thermos is a proper one, it does not let hot drinks get tepid, nor does it allow cold drinks to lose their freshness and grow lukewarm.

The means by which this is brought about are quite simple. The liquid is poured into a bottle which is fitted inside another bottle. In between the two bottles, or flasks, there is a small space called a 'vacuum'. It is a space from which all air has been taken out. You see, it is the air which takes off the heat from the hot drinks, and it is also the air which brings in the warmth to spoil

the cold ones. So if there is no air, the heat cannot get in or out. This vacuum, or space without air, acts as an unseen wall; it makes an inner separation from the world around. There was a time when my flask was like that. The small airless space inside made sure that my drinks were not affected by the weather or the world outside. If I put in a hot drink, then it stayed hot; if a cold one, then it stayed icy and fresh.

Now, however, the only kind of drinks which it can offer are lukewarm and nasty to the taste. It doesn't work. And I know what the cause of the trouble is. Although it looks quite all right on the outside, there is a tiny hole between the inner and outer flasks, so that now there is no vacuum to separate them. The air has got in, so that there is no empty space to protect what is inside from the world around. That unseen wall, so thin and yet so important, is no longer there. The flask still looks very nice. It has not been even dented, let alone smashed. The cork is as good as ever. Still it has been spoiled; it is neither hot nor cold; and all because of a tiny hole which has let in the air and taken away the inner separation made by the vacuum.

That is why I call it a Laodicean Thermos Flask. The Laodiceans were Christians who at one time brought great joy to their Lord, and that was when they had an inner wall guarding their hearts to keep them from being spoiled by the world all around. When they first trusted Christ as their Saviour, they were filled with a longing to please Him, they were glowing with love for their Lord. This was not their own doing; it was what the Lord had done for them, for He had filled their hearts with His own great love. The love of God had been shed abroad in their hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given unto them (Rom. 5.5). They felt that they could never love Him enough, and that their love would never cool off. It would not matter how cold and hard were the people around them; this should never affect them, for they would trust the Lord to protect them from the spirit of the world by putting His vacuum, His

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hidden wall, around their hearts. The heat could not leak out and the cold could not creep in, so long as this inner separation was there.

But alas! they became neither hot nor cold. Something went wrong. It seems that the Lord Jesus had gone among them hoping to find refreshment for His spirit. He was thirsty for their love. But He was made very sad, for they had cooled off; they were neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm. Just a tiny hole of sin or self had let in the worldly air from round about them; there was no longer a space between their hearts and the world in which they lived. Outwardly they seemed as good as ever, but they brought much sorrow to the heart of the

Lord, and He had to send them this message: "I know they works, that thou art neither cold nor hot" (Rev. 3. 15).

It is too late to do anything about my flask, but happily it was not too late for the Laodiceans. The Lord Jesus was still able to take all the lukewarmness from their hearts and fill them again with His love. If we, too, have been cooling off, if our love has begun to grow cold because of the world creeping into our hearts, we must ask Him to put things right. He is able to fill us anew with His great love, and to keep our hearts separate from the world around us so that they may be kept always and only for Himself.

H. F.

WE BEHELD HIS GLORY

(CHAPTER VI OF VOL. II)

WITH the phase of John's revelation of spiritual truth that is marked, in our arrangement, by the beginning of Chapter xvi, we are presented with an immense development. It is nothing less than the grand turning point in the dispensations. There is here coming into view another dispensation, with its own particular and peculiar nature; an altogether new economy is about to be inaugurated. It is—

THE DISPENSATION OF THE SPIRIT

For many centuries the Law had reigned. Then came the brief interlude of the Incarnation, in which—as to the past—for the first and only time, the Law had its perfect fulfilment in a Man, and—as to the future—the new reign of the Spirit—also in a Man—was exemplified.

Now, the 'going' of that One to the Father is shown to be imminent. It is also shown to be essential in order that all in Him through faith should move on to that new basis.

There are one or two things in this part of the Lord's discourse which had a point and edge that startled those who heard them, and which need to be recovered from the blunting effect of familiarity and tradition where we are concerned. That the invisible should be of value far transcending the visible, that the intangible should transcend the tangible, the inward the objective, the inaudible the audible, was by no means a simple thing to believe. That this change was "expedient" was far from easy to accept.

To let go the personal, physical, present embodiment of all hope and expectations—all that He had come to mean to them—for One who seemed so impersonal, incomprehensible, and mysterious, was a change to be contemplated only with misgivings and fears.

And yet it was being categorically stated that the one was incomparably more important than the other—the Spirit than the Incarnate Christ as visibly present!

Then again, this was all being stated with such an air of assumption. It seemed to be assumed that the coming of the Spirit was a part of the course of things, and essential as the complement of Christ's work. In what ways would this be?

(1) Christ's physical presence was outward and objective.

The Holy Spirit would be within and subjective.

(2) Christ physically would be limited to one place at a time, and by all the straitness of time and geography.

The Holy Spirit would be immanent, omnipresent; with all, everywhere, at all times—or apart from time.

(3) Christ physical must do His work and return to the Father.

The Holy Spirit would "abide for ever" ("unto the age").

(4) Christ came that in the body He might accomplish eternal redemption through the Cross.

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The Holy Spirit would make that work the basis and means of world-wide and continuous conviction as to man's need of it.

(5) While the relationship of men to Jesus in the flesh remained, it would remain a matter of following and falteringly responding to commands and regulations imposed, with all the contradictions which did actually mark the three years with Him.

By the coming of the Holy Spirit to reside in them they would become actually spiritual men, with the Spirit of Christ within.

The proof and evidence that this was right—this great and critical change-over from Christ in the flesh to the Holy Spirit—is seen abundantly in the transformation which took place in these same men with and from the Day of Pentecost. It is a very profitable thing to tabulate the points of difference in them before and after that event. Not only was that immediately so, but the progress spiritually was more in three months than it had been in three years; and so it continued.

This is the inclusive and fundamental difference between this dispensation and the earlier, and it is a challenge to us as to whether we have really entered into the distinctive nature of the dispensation in which we live, according to God's order. More on this later in another connection.

The next primary thing in this section of the discourse is—

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S WORK IN RELATION TO CHRIST

The Lord said that the Holy Spirit would make it His active business to work in relation to Himself—Jesus Christ.

This work would be in two directions.

- (1) As to themselves.
- (2) As to the world.

(1) As to themselves, He would be to and in them the Spirit of revelation.

It is positively affirmed that, as they were before, and without this definite gift and reception of the Spirit as an event, they were without the capacity or ability to receive and "bear" the much that Christ had to say to them. Let us note—"I have many things to say to you". Into that statement must be gathered all that they came to know in after years, much of which comprises our 'New Testament'. But even Apostles had to confess to being unable to say

all that they wanted to because of the limited spirituality of believers.

What was true of the Disciples before Pentecost is true comparatively of believers always, according to the life in the Spirit.

Spiritual knowledge is not only the result of study, reason, deduction or information.

The Scriptures, or what the Lord has said and which is recorded for us, are essentially the Holy Spirit's basis and means of operation, but revelation as to what the Lord *meant*, and of the inexhaustible content of any Divine utterance, is a plus, an extra, whilst at the same time consistency with Divine principles is preserved.

The proof that the 'eyes of the heart have been enlightened' is that the truth has become a power, a life, a revolution, not just a system of doctrine. Christ never violated any Scripture or Divine principle, and yet the mass of those who believed that they were the custodians of the truth firmly and fiercely believed that He did so. This stands to emphasize the fact that in the realm of Scripture there can be two positively opposed positions—that of the men of the letter, and that of the men of the Word plus the Spirit.

While everyone will agree that the phrase 'Spirit-taught men' expresses the need of all times, and that this is no contradiction to the teaching of Scripture, yet, strangely enough, this marks a distinction which issues in the conflict referred to in John xv. 18 - 26; xvi. 1 - 3.

It is here made unquestionably clear that persecution has its chief force in those who hold firmly to a traditional position as to their apprehension of Scripture, as against those who, having the same Bible, have had a mighty work of the Spirit of God done in them by which they have been introduced into a realm which, while not contradictory to the Word, yet holds the all-inclusive and overwhelming significance of Christ in God's universe. "These things will they do unto you because they have not known the Father, nor me."

That knowledge of the Father and the Son is a revelation of the Holy Spirit, without which we may be the fiercest protagonists of Biblical tradition and yet—like Saul of Tarsus—'be all wrong. So, when it comes to summing up the meaning of the new dispensation where believers are concerned, it amounts to this: 'Have we really, by a definite work of the Holy Spirit within us, seen the significance and meaning of Christ in God's creational, redemptive, and consummate scheme of things?' If not, then there is an open door to every one of the unhappy con-

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ditions in Christendom. If so, we are on higher ground than all that is petty, personal, earthly, and cruel.

(2) As to the world (verse 8).

The words of this statement are often quoted, but their inclusive meaning is often overlooked or missed.

Note—The focal point of the world-convicting work of the Spirit is Christ and His work.

(a) *The Sin question.*

Note that it is not in the plural—sins.

The Holy Spirit may convict *believers* of sins, but He does not do this with the world.

The judgment of the world will not be on the basis of sins, greater or less, these or those. If that were so, it would be unjust. Some are—as General Booth put it—‘damned into the world’. That is, from birth or before the most terrible forms of sin are their heritage. Others inherit and come into much more helpful and propitious conditions, which conduce to a more moral conduct. To condemn the one and be generous to the other would be totally unrighteous. God has His basis of judgment for both, and on it all are brought to a common level. The basis is: —

God sent His Son into the world to redeem the world (John iii. 17 ; Gal. iv. 4, 5).

What have you done with Him?

And: — “Because they believe not on me.”

The whole sin question is focused in acceptance or non-acceptance of Christ.

(b) *The Righteousness question.*

“Because I go to the Father.”

If Jesus was—while truly God—truly man, taking man’s place before God, representative and substitutionary, and eventually—as man—goes to the Father, then, seeing that no unrighteous man will ever be in the presence of the Father, the whole question of righteousness must have been settled in Him as Man for man. This is the vast subject of “Righteousness by faith in Jesus Christ”; but in our passage it is concisely stated that the Holy Spirit’s convicting work will be on the basis of Jesus Christ the Righteous, and on no other ground of righteousness, more or less, whether ceremonial, claimed, professed, worked up, or striven after.

(c) *The Judgment question.*

How wonderful are these simple though comprehensive formulae.

Here the tremendous field of judgment is covered in one concise phrase: “Because the prince of this world has been judged.” What does that mean?

Well, in God’s thought and intention there is only one Prince for this world. But another, a false prince, a usurper, a rival, has gained a position of lordship, and this by man’s assent or acceptance.

“The whole world lieth in the wicked one.”

But in the Cross of Christ this other has been judged, condemned, and “cast out”. By that Cross his casting out of Heaven has been followed by his casting out of the earth—in the thought and rights of God for His Son.

From the day of the Spirit, when Jesus began to be preached as “Lord”, “Prince and Saviour” (the great Apostolic theme), judgment is gathered into the matter of a deliberate choice of sides. In Christ judgment has been finished. ‘Out of Christ’ means ‘in Satan’: therefore in the realm of double judgment—exclusion both from God’s kingdom here and from Heaven.

So judgment is solely a matter of taking sides, but it is Christ again who is the deciding Factor.

Thus the Spirit has as His ground the Person and work of Christ, in their respective meanings for the believer and the world.

This may be an added factor in that hostility to which the Lord so much referred at that time, and which was so satanically manifested after the Spirit had come.

But there is much comfort for believers in this chapter. The Spirit who was in and with the Lord Jesus is promised and given to all who will receive Him. All the possibilities and potentialities of the Spirit’s indwelling, for progressive and never-ending knowledge of Christ’s fulness, and for service, are for those who will take the ground of the new dispensation—the ground of Christ’s absolute Lordship, His perfected work—and who live abidingly in and by the Spirit.

T. A-S.

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A GREAT WARFARE

STUDIES IN BUNYAN'S "HOLY WAR" V

'Now there was in the Market place in Mansoul, and also upon the Gates of the Castle, an *image* of the blessed King Shaddai. This *image* was so exactly engraven (and it was engraven in gold), that it did the most resemble Shaddai himself of anything that then was extant in the World. *This* Diabolus basely commanded to be defaced.'

IN these words Bunyan vividly brings before us one of the supreme issues in the gigantic controversy which has raged for so long in and around the Town of Mansoul. The question of THE IMAGE which is in and upon the Town lies at the centre of Heaven's controversy with Hell. In Genesis i. 26-27 we read: "And God said, Let us make *man* in *our image*, after *our likeness* . . . And God created *man* in *his own image*, in the *image of God* created he him." What a wonderful, holy and unique destiny was MAN'S in his creation! *Created in the image of GOD!* But, alas, the image has been defaced, and we find 'set up in its stead the horrid and formidable image of Diabolus, to the great contempt of the former king and debasing of his Town of Mansoul'. How terribly true is Bunyan's picture. Man, who was created in the image of God, to reveal what *God* is like, to be His *unique* channel of expressing Himself, is now a tragic caricature and the expression of another nature. Not all the feverish efforts of civilisation can cover over the fact that man now belongs to the under-world. "Ye are from *beneath*", is the word of the Lord Jesus (John viii. 23). But the Lord is jealous for His Name. In defacing God's image in Mansoul, Diabolus has taken His Name in vain, so that when Emmanuel comes for the Town's deliverance He has this to say to Diabolus:

'Oh, thou Master of *Enmity*, thou hast of *spite* defaced my Father's Image in Mansoul, and set up thy own in its place, to the great *contempt* of my Father, the heightening of thy sin, and to the intolerable damage of the perishing Town of Mansoul.'

And when Diabolus has been cast out by one stronger than he, we read that Emmanuel—

'commanded that the Image of Diabolus should be taken down from the place where it was set up, and that they should destroy it ut-

terly, beating of it into powder, and casting it into the wind, without the Town wall; and that the Image of Shaddai, his Father, should be set up again, with *his own*, upon the Castle gates; and that it should be more fairly drawn than ever, forasmuch as both his Father and himself were come to Mansoul in more Grace and Mercy than heretofore. He would also that *his Name* should be fairly engraven upon the front of the Town, and that it should be done in the best of Gold, for the honour of the Town of Mansoul.'

The Lord has clearly set His heart upon having, in MAN, that which *reveals* HIM, that which *represents* HIM, that which fully *responds* to HIM. The Lord Jesus, of course, alone, has revealed what is in the heart of God for man. In Him alone is the *meaning of manhood* seen. In Him we see the Father's *perfect representative*, for He said: "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John xiv. 9). In Him we see *one fully responsive* to the Father, for He said: "I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me", and: "I do always the things that are pleasing to him" (John vi. 38; viii. 29). Now, we are being conformed to the image of Him who is the image of the invisible God. We are destined "to be conformed to the image of His Son". (Rom. viii. 29; Col. i. 15). Thus, the Christian life has at its centre this matter of the removal of the usurper's image and the bringing in of the image and likeness of Him who is all His Father's delight. Our destiny is to be "like him" and to have 'His Name on our foreheads' (I John iii. 2; Rev. xxii. 4). How immediate, ever-present and far-reaching are the implications of our destiny in union with Christ! One of our deepest needs is an adequate *sense of destiny*.

It will help us to a better understanding of Mansoul's destiny if we spend time considering certain features of the Town itself, and in particular the significance of the *Gates*, the *Castle* and the *Market-Place*.

THE FIVE GATES OF MANSOUL

"This famous Town of Mansoul had five Gates, in at which to come, out at which to go; and these were made likewise answerable to the

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

Walls: to wit, *Impregnable*, and such as could never be opened nor forced but by the will and leave of those within. The names of the Gates were these: *Ear-gate*, *Eye-gate*, *Mouth-gate*, *Nose-gate*, and *Feel-gate*."

The gates speak, in the first place, of the five senses, but it is a consideration of the spiritual counterparts of our physical senses that we shall find most instructive. If our outward ears and eyes are important, how much more the inward ears and eyes of the heart. By means of our physical senses we live in *this world*, but the Lord is concerned to develop spiritual faculties in us, whereby we shall live with Him *above*. He is "not of the world" and we are "not of the world" (John xvii. 16), but how shall we live as those who belong to Heaven without spiritual senses? Let us look more closely at these gates.

EAR-GATE

"*He that hath ears to hear, let him hear*" (Matt. xi. 15, etc.)

Ear-gate, Bunyan tells us, was the chief Gate of Mansoul, and many were the battles that raged around it during the course of the war. By nature man is spiritually deaf. We hear with our outward ears, but the inner ear of the heart is stone deaf. This is what the Lord Jesus meant when He said again and again: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear". This is what John meant when he said: "They are of the world: therefore speak they as of the world, and the world *heareth* them. We are of God: he that knoweth God *heareth* us; he who is not of God *heareth* us not" (I John iv. 5, 6). This is why it is possible to have a great store of Bible knowledge in the mind and at the same time to be a spiritual pauper. It is not enough to hear with the outward ear; we must hear the Lord speaking to our hearts, and this is only granted to those who are acutely aware of their need. Only as we are cast upon Him will the Lord teach us; He has nothing to say to the wise and prudent and self-sufficient.

But while it is true that we have no ear for God by nature—and this is true of Christians *in themselves* as well as of the unregenerate (see Rev. iii. 22)—the Lord is set upon having a people who "know His voice": "*My sheep hear my voice*" (John x. 27). The Lord Jesus as a Man had an ear for His Father's voice: "all things that I *heard* from my Father I have made known unto you" (John xv. 15). By new birth the life of this one is in us, and the increase of His life in us will include the development of this faculty of spiritual

hearing. How important it is to the Lord that He should have, in such a day as this, those in this world who are in tune with Him, those who know what He is saying and wanting. After all, a deaf servant is not very much use to his master. The great process of "conforming us to the *image* of His Son", the perfect Man, includes the development of this faculty.

EYE-GATE

"*Having the eyes of your heart enlightened*" (Ephesians i. 18).

What a lot there is in the Word about our 'eyes', about spiritual sight and spiritual blindness. *Eye-gate* was regarded as of the greatest strategic importance in the war, both by Emmanuel and by Diabolus. Unfortunately the history of the gates is too detailed for us to attempt to trace it all out here. To put it in a nutshell, while the enemy is always seeking to draw our gaze to himself and the "things which are seen", the temporal things, and to frighten us by the display of his power, the Lord is ever seeking to draw our eyes away to His glory and grace and sufficiency, to the "things which are not seen", the eternal realities (II Cor. iv. 18). We must learn to look at the "things which are not seen"! Moses "endured, as seeing him who is invisible" (Heb. xi. 27). In other words, his spiritual eyes were wide open toward Heaven. Moses had a single eye, a singleness of purpose toward God. He also had his eyes open to the "greater riches" of Christ. This too is our need, to be people walking in the full light of Heaven, because we have no eyes for anything or anyone save the Lord Himself, to be people the eyes of whose hearts are being more and more enlightened to understand the glorious meaning of our being united to the Lord of glory (Matt. vi. 22, 23; Ephesians i. 18-19).

MOUTH-GATE

"*Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*" (Matthew xii. 34).

By our mouths, of course, we are able to taste, to eat and to speak, but these natural functions immediately bring before us their deeper significance. We read: "Oh *taste* and see that the Lord is good", and: "if ye have *tasted* that the Lord is gracious" (Ps. xxxiv. 8; I Pet. ii. 3). Well, we, who know the Lord, have tasted Him, that He is both good and gracious. And are we not learning, as we go on with Him, that there are many things in ourselves and in this world that leave a nasty taste in the mouth, things that are better left alone!

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Then again, we read in John vi. 53, 54: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye *eat* the flesh of the Son of man and *drink* his blood, ye have not life in yourselves. He that *eateth* my flesh and *drinketh* my blood hath eternal life". Well, we who are the Lord's know that He is our life and that we have to feed upon Him continually, and are we not also learning to keep off all food that does not agree with us! We need the "true bread" and the "living bread" which is Christ, and to keep off everything else. A wrong diet surely accounts for many spiritual ailments among the Lord's people. It is the rich, nourishing food of the living Christ that we need. We all know the difference between 'home-made' cakes and those we generally have to buy. It is the food that "cometh down out of heaven", where we belong, that we need and must have.

But *Mouth-gate* is also the gate by which we express ourselves, and quite naturally it is with this aspect of *Mouth-gate* that Bunyan is occupied in his story. He speaks of it as a *sally-port*, that is, an opening in the fortifications through which petitions could be sent to the Court above, and through which the enemy could be assailed with the Slings of the Word. In an earlier study we have seen something of the importance of the *utterance of faith* in assaulting the enemy and withstanding his assaults. But, as with the other gates, there is an inner meaning to *Mouth-gate*, for there is a language of the heart, a speaking with the Lord in our hearts. We *commune* with the Lord *in our hearts*, in the first instance; we *worship* Him *in spirit*. If this is not true, then no words that we may utter will be true or have any value. What a lot there is in the Word about *Mouth-gate*—about our talking! What we say gives us away. We are revealed by our words, and "if any stumbleth not in *word*, the same is a perfect man" (James iii. 2). But it is the inner *Mouth-gate* of our hearts that must be our chief concern, what we are saying in our hearts to the Lord and about people. How easily we fall into murmuring against the Lord in our trials, not with our lips, perhaps, but in our hearts; how easily criticism of others wells up within. The Lord would establish His victory in our hearts as well as at the door of our lips.

"Let the words of *my mouth* and the meditation of *my heart* be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my rock, and my redeemer" (Ps. xix. 14).

NOSE-GATE

"We are a *sweet savour of Christ unto God*" (II Corinthians ii. 15).

At first sight it seems strange that there should

be any spiritual significance in *Nose-gate*! Perhaps the thought of *Nose-gate* makes us smile! But there is such a thing as a spiritual sense of smell. Consider what it says of Noah's burnt-offerings in Genesis viii. 21: "And the Lord smelled the sweet savour". Then, Paul speaks about the savour of the knowledge of God, thus likening the knowledge of Christ to a fragrant smell. Again, Paul speaks of the Cross as "an offering and a sacrifice to God for an odour of a sweet smell" (Eph. v. 2). Clearly, then, there is such a thing as a spiritual sense of smell.

In Bunyan's history of the war, we read that Diabolus 'placed Captain *Brimstone* and Captain *Sepulchre* at *Nose-gate*.' Well, we have probably all encountered at some time the stifling smell of fumes and fire, and the offensive smell of death and corruption. Captain *Brimstone* and Captain *Sepulchre* are terrible spiritual forces bent upon stifling and corrupting our spiritual lives. The powers of hell can be terribly real, pervading, as it were, the very atmosphere.

Then again, a sense of smell can often be our salvation: but for it many of us would have been gassed long ago! If it is true—and it is—to speak of *the fragrance of Christ*, it is also true to speak of the noisome odour of the under-world. The Lord make us those who are quick to scent where the fragrance of Christ is, and those who carry His fragrance upon us; the Lord make us quick to scent and to avoid everything unsavoury or dangerous.

"Wisdom . . . her ways are ways of pleasantness" (Proverbs iii. 13, 17).

FEEL-GATE

"In all their affliction he was afflicted" (Is. lxiii. 9).

'Captain *Cruel* and Captain *Torment*, these Diabolus drew up, and placed against *Feel-gate*, and commanded them to sit down there for the war. And he also appointed that, if need were, Captain *No-Ease* should come in to their relief.'

'So the Night was come, and all things by the Tyrant made ready for the work, he suddenly makes his assault upon *Feel-gate*, and after he had a while struggled there he throws the Gates wide open: for *the truth is, those Gates were but weak*, and so most easily made to yield.'

The enemy knows how to deploy his forces to the best advantage! How well he knows our weak points! He knows all about *Feel-gate*, and how to put the pressure on, using *Cruel* and *Torment*, and how to keep it on with the help of *No-Ease*. At

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one time in the campaign, the body of the Town was overrun through *Feel-gate*. Oh, yes, we know a little of what Paul meant when he said: "we were weighed down exceedingly, beyond our power, insomuch that we despaired even of life"; but then, Paul also had the experience of a glorious deliverance "out of so great a death"! (II Cor. i. 8-10). The victorious Christian life is not a life in which we are always feeling happy and glibly praising the Lord—it is rather a *life in which we triumph in His triumph in the face of overwhelming, impossible odds*. Paul's second letter to the Corinthians throws a great deal of light on this.

But *Feel-gate* also brings before us the spiritual faculty of *touch*, or *spiritual sensitiveness*. We all know how wonderfully the physical faculty of touch is developed in a person afflicted with blindness, so that it is even possible for him to read by touch. Spiritual sensitivity is a wonderful thing. We should be learning all the time, from the reactions of the Holy Spirit in our spirits, what we may and what we may not touch.

Now the sum of what we have said is this: that the conforming of us to the image of Christ involves and includes the development in us of spiritual senses. In Adam we possess natural senses, in Christ we possess spiritual senses. Our natural faculties are inherent in human life, but they have to develop none the less. Our spiritual faculties are inherent in Christ's life in us, but they too must develop. To this end the Holy Spirit is with us, that we "may grow up in all things into him", that is, that His image may be increasingly found in us.

THE CASTLE-PALACE IN THE MIDST OF MANSOUL

'There was reared up in the midst of this Town a most famous and stately Palace; for strength, it might be called a *Castle*; for pleasantness, a *Paradise*; for largeness, a place so copious as to contain all the world. This place the King Shaddai intended but for himself alone.'

In these graphic words Bunyan pictures to us "the inward man" (Eph. iii. 16), the very heart of Mansoul, the inner citadel of the human *spirit*. It was in this Palace that Shaddai intended to dwell, for the human spirit constitutes man a being who is able to have communion with God, who is spirit. Man is fundamentally a spiritual being. When Diabolus captured the Town, he made the *Castle* his headquarters. The human spirit has thus made possible an unholy alliance with the evil one, so that we read of "the spirit that now worketh

in the sons of disobedience" (Eph. ii. 2). We need to see that salvation involves a very deep work of grace in us, reaching down to the hidden recesses of our beings, far below the world of our consciousness. The *Castle* has got to be cleared of the enemy as well as the *Market-Place* and the *Walls*. Our redemption includes that of our *spirits*, *souls* and *bodies* (I Thess. v. 23). If we realised something of the magnitude of the Holy Spirit's task to "sanctify us *wholly*", we should understand better some of His deep ways with us.

Bunyan speaks of the *Castle* as 'the whole strength of the Town' and 'the Prerogative-royal of Mansoul'; which means just this, that whoever possessed the *Castle* possessed the Town. The *Castle* was the key to the Town. How illuminating this is! Satan's objective in assailing man at the beginning was to sever man's link with God and to establish a spiritual link between man and his kingdom of darkness. The Lord's first objective in seeking fallen man is to establish a bridgehead in the human *spirit*, and this is just what happens at new birth: the Holy Spirit establishes a bridgehead of life in the human spirit (John iii. 6). Emmanuel knew that in order to gain the whole Town He had to be *Master of the Castle*. Now, here is something of the greatest importance. Until the Lord has captured the inner citadel of the heart, however much the outer defences may have been battered, the Town remains in enemy hands. It is quite possible for a life to take a terrible battering, to feel the impact of Emmanuel's slings, to have the emotions stirred, to have the mind convinced and to hear the booming voice of conscience, to have reached a point of apparent surrender, and still to remain in the hands of the enemy. *Until a life has capitulated to the Lord and He has taken up residence within there can be no certainty as to the issue of the battle. But once the Lord is Master of the Castle the issue is settled.*

THE CASTLE IN CONTRAST TO THE MARKET-PLACE

Now while the *Castle* pictures to us the *spirit*, the residence of the Holy Spirit and the seat of God-consciousness, the *Market-Place* brings before us the *sphere of conscious life*, the *soul*, the sphere of self-conscious and world-conscious life. While we need to beware of the pitfall of self-analysis, it is clearly possible to distinguish between soul and spirit, or the Word of God would not talk about "the dividing of soul and spirit" (Heb. iv. 12). A very great deal is bound up with our so learning to distinguish, *but only the Holy*

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Spirit can explain the difference, and this He will do largely in experience.

The *Market-Place* was the place where the Townsmen congregated, where proclamations were read; it was the place of Audience. It was there that business was transacted, for Mansoul was a *Market-Town*. How well the picture of a market portrays the human soul; a place of traffic, of turbulent desires and emotions, of eager self-interest, of incessant hubbub! How well we know the whirl of this life as it makes its impact upon us every day, and how great is the need of retiring into the *Castle*, as it were, that is, into quiet communion with the Lord in our spirits, deeper down than all the turmoil.

But our immediate point is this, that *our souls are the vantage ground of the enemy*. At one point in the war the enemy broke into the Town, and 'the body of the Town was the Seat of War' for about two years and a half. It may be that we have known times when the enemy has got right on top of us, when we have felt at the end of everything, when *Conscience* has been upon a rack, when *Understanding* has almost had his eyes put out and we have been battered into bewilderment. Then it is that we need to recall that in the hour of crisis *the Castle held out*. The *Lord Secretary* was still in the *Castle*, and with him the *Heavenly Captains* and *Willbewill* also, and *Godly-Fear* was Keeper of the *Castle Gates*. When the enemy comes in like a flood we must learn to retire to the quiet strength of the *Castle*, and as we do we shall find that the Lord lifts up a standard against him (Isa. lix. 19). We are united to the Lord much deeper down than our feelings and understanding. It is only the surface of the sea that is whipped up by the storm; the deep is quite unaffected by it. The Lord would have us learn to live with Him in the *Castle*: so will the rest of the Town come under the power of His peace.

THE CROSS AND THE IMAGE, IN THE MARKET-PLACE

We have already said that the *Market-Place* of the soul is in a particular way the haunt of the

enemy. It was here that the disguised Diabolonians offered their services to the Mansoulans, and Mr. *Mind* hired *Prudent-Thrift* (really Lord *Covetousness*), Mr. *Godly-Fear* hired *Good-Zeal* (really Lord *Anger*), and *Willbewill* hired *Harmless-Mirth* (really Lord *Lasciviousness*). It is in the realm of our feelings, our emotions, our desires, our likes and dislikes, our ideas and opinions, that the enemy deceives us and takes us in. For this reason the Cross was set up in the *Market-Place*. Wherever the enemy is found the Cross comes in to answer him. The power of the Cross has to be planted deeply into our corrupted and deceivable souls for their recovery.

Now, the soul is the man. It is written: "and man became a living soul" (Gen. ii. 7). Man is a spiritual being but he is also a soul. We are real people, real individuals. Man's soul is wonderful material for good or evil. While the enemy is out to degrade and to destroy us and to utilise us for his own ends, the Lord is out to recover and gain *our souls, us*, by His Cross for His glory. See how Satan employs the souls of fallen men for his own ends: why, this world is serving Satan day and night, through its ambitions, longings, desires, thoughts, intentions and self-seeking. But the Lord's concern is to set up His Image in the *Market-Place*. In the beginning the Image was upon the *Castle Gates*, and in the *Market-Place* also. When Emmanuel recaptured the Town, a still fairer image was set upon the *Castle Gates*, and His Name engraven upon the front of the Town, *but there is no mention of the image in the Market-Place*. How significant is this omission! We may in a moment come to bear His image upon our spirits at new birth, for *He* has entered; we may in a moment come to bear His Name upon us when we become His; but the image in the *Market-Place* involves a great work in us whereby we are *changed in character*, "transformed into the same image from glory to glory", until we are "conformed to the image of his Son", and to this great work the Lord the Spirit has set His hand.

T. L. M.

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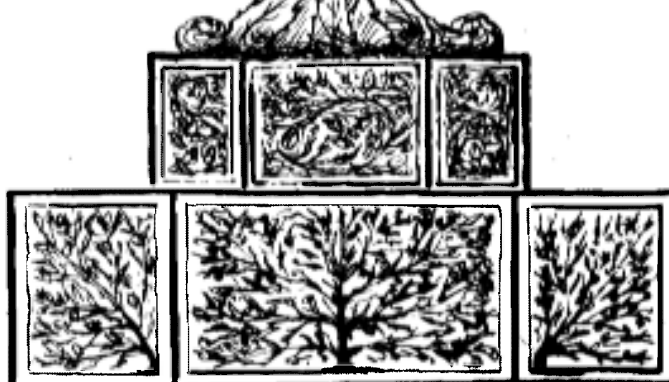
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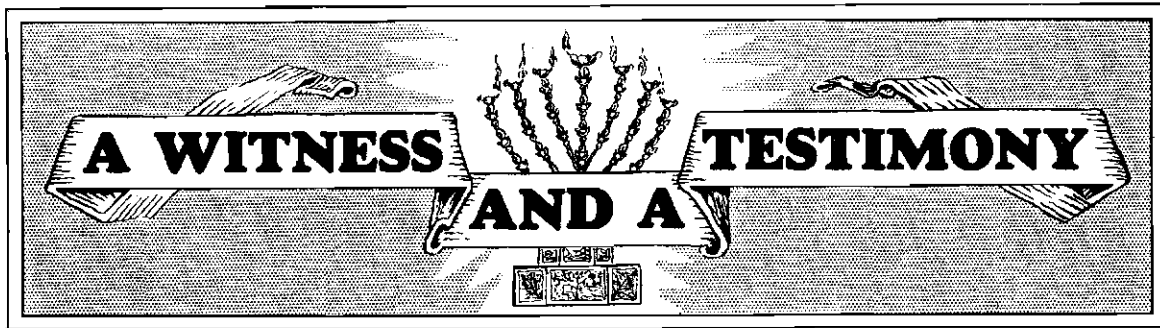
THIS MINISTRY

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

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

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

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Mr. T. AUSTIN-SPARKS.



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Vol. 32, No. 6.

THE RECOVERING OF THE LORD'S TESTIMONY IN FULNESS

VIII. A PECULIAR TREASURE

"And the princes of the people dwelt in Jerusalem: the rest of the people also cast lots, to bring one of ten to dwell in Jerusalem the holy city, and nine parts in the other cities. And the people blessed all the men that willingly offered themselves to dwell in Jerusalem. Now these are the chiefs of the province that dwelt in Jerusalem: but in the cities of Judah dwelt every one in his possession in their cities, to wit, Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the Nethinim, and the children of Solomon's servants" (Nehemiah xi. 1-3).

"Then they that feared the Lord spake one with another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in the day that I do make, even a peculiar treasure; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him" (Malachi iii. 16, 17).

AS we come to the last of this series of messages, it is necessary to have the whole background before us in order really to appreciate the setting of this final word. We have been led, as we have considered the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem by Nehemiah and those who were inspired by him, to see again that, as that was a movement of God at the end-time of the old dispensation (Nehemiah being the last historical book of the Old Testament), so there is a corresponding movement in our own time, as we move toward the end of this dispensation: that God would seek to complete, make full, the testimony of His Son, our Lord

Jesus Christ. We have looked at that testimony, as to what it is; we have taken account of the work, and the workers related to it; and we have also given some consideration to the conflict, the warfare, in which the workers in such a work are involved.

Now for a brief and simple word arising out of the two passages which we have just read. More than once in the course of these messages we have reminded ourselves that Nehemiah and Malachi were contemporary, that what we read of in the book of Nehemiah should be placed alongside of that which we have in the prophecies of Malachi. Malachi tells of the conditions in the days of Nehemiah, and here we come to what may be regarded as a final word in the matter. In this eleventh chapter of the book of Nehemiah, there is mentioned a peculiar offering to the Lord, and in Malachi iii a peculiar treasure of the Lord.

A TITHE OF THE PEOPLE

The peculiar offering, as you notice, was now not a tithe of *things*. Tithing of things was dealt with, but here was a tithe of the *people*, a tithe of the whole people, a tenth part of those who had come back and who had engaged in this work of rebuilding the wall, and that tenth part became a peculiar freewill offering to the Lord. Let us put a line under the tenth part for a moment: because, whether we like it or not, whether we are prepared to accept it or not, the fact remains that it always has been, and, so far as the forecast of the New Testament goes, it will be to the end, that there are

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only a certain few who go the full length with the Lord in His whole purpose. After all the sifting that had taken place—the first great sifting in Babylon when there came back a company, and then a second sifting when a few more came back—after the siftings, here we find ourselves at a kind of final sifting, when the number is still further reduced and it is only a tenth part who will voluntarily abide in Jerusalem by their own choice—just a tenth part. It seems that they correspond to Malachi iii. 16, 17, that company that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His Name: because you notice that it goes on to say: “They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in the day that I do make, even a peculiar treasure”, and He has made a record of them—“The Lord hearkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him”; a record was kept.

THE LORD'S BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE

Now in Nehemiah xi. 4-24 you have the names, the record, of those who were a freewill offering. The Lord kept a record, the Lord composed a “book of remembrance”, the Lord entered the names of these, and concerning them He says they are “a peculiar treasure”, something He specially treasures. The Lord is looking for some who will be to Him “a kind of firstfruits”, a kind who will be in the vanguard, following Him “whithersoever he goeth”. He does look for a nucleus who will mean the satisfaction of His heart in the first place and in the essential way. As He looks out on a great multitude—and He has a great multitude who are His in the earth to-day—it cannot be said that all who bear His Name, all who are the Lord's, are utterly following and wholly going on, or meaning to do so. No, it is not so. But He looks for this tithing of His people, this tenth part representation answering to His own heart desire. They to Him are peculiarly precious. “They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in the day that I do make, even a peculiar treasure”. That is the final issue of this matter of the whole testimony: who will voluntarily go all the way with the Lord, no matter what it costs?

A FREEWILL OFFERING

Now it was a freewill offering, this tithing. Each one of the tenth made it voluntarily. They submitted themselves voluntarily to this casting of lots. You might object that if a lot was cast they had no option, they had to accept it whether they liked it or not, but the point is that they willingly

committed themselves to that method. That was a willing, a freewill, offering unto the Lord. No compulsion here, no law here, no legality here—it was just willingness. Are you prepared, out of your own heart, to make a response and say, without any bribery, without any fear of the consequences if you do not: ‘Yes, I am going all the way with the Lord, I am going to see that the Lord gets all that He wants so far as I am concerned’? That may mean a lot, that may involve a lot. But the Lord does not ask you to do it. He just waits for it—a freewill offering, a peculiar treasure to Him because it is freewill.

But what did it mean, this living at Jerusalem—this living at the very heart of the testimony, in other words? For since the wall represents the testimony, people coming into residence within the wall in Jerusalem really represented a spiritual movement—that there are those who are prepared to live right at the heart of the testimony. It was necessary, and it always is necessary, to the Lord that some do that—come right into the heart of it, to be there in the place of responsibility concerning it. There is a need that the testimony should be taken up with a sense of responsibility for its maintenance, that it shall be kept whole, that it shall be guarded, that it shall be served, that it shall be ministered to. If you look at the details concerning those who came within, you see their various ministries. I cannot take up the detail now, but you will see the various ministries which were represented by those who came into Jerusalem. They came in to fulfil a ministry, a spiritual ministry, on the inside, and take responsibility there. It was a need the testimony required.

A GREAT COST

But there was a great cost attached to it. Not everybody was prepared for that, not at all. There were many who were ready for it, who accepted the method of choice to live inside, who were not called upon to do so, but there were those who, in the sovereign overruling of God, found themselves called upon to do so. The lot fell out in their direction. God sovereignly saw to it that that was how things went for them, and it represented a real cost. It was very much nicer to live outside Jerusalem than inside. These men came into the city, on that day when the lot was to be cast, ready to accept the result as the will of God for them.

And then the lot was cast, and it fell to them to come and live in the city. I can imagine some of those men going back to their suburban dwell-

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ings, wondering what the reaction was going to be at home about this ; saying to their wives : ' My dear, we have to go and live in the city, we have to move into Jerusalem—the lot has fallen to us.' Well, of course, the right kind of wife would say this : ' My dear, it was a matter of prayer, was it not? We prayed about it, that if it was to come our way the Lord would overrule, that if He wanted us He would let the lot fall on us. It was before the Lord ; it is all right, the Lord wants it. Of course, it means giving up our nice little country house and our nice garden. It means losing that circle of friends we have out here. But still the Lord has laid it on us and we do not do it with any murmuring. But there are the children—perhaps that is the hardest part of all, the children. They have to lose so much—this free life out here, this life with all these others out here in the larger scale. They are involved in this.' And then they would turn to the children, and say : ' Listen, children : we have got to go and live in the city. We shall have to leave the country, and the garden, and all these others out here, and go to Jerusalem for the Lord, because the Lord wants it.' They would be very happy parents to whom the children said : ' Yes, we realise that your devotion to the Lord is costing you something, it is meaning a lot for you ; and if we are involved in it, well, of course it means a lot to us—but we are with you in this.'

I do not think that is all imagination. I am quite sure that it was a costly thing to move into Jerusalem—and it always is costly to live at the heart of the testimony. Those who do so must forego many things that other people may have. You lose the large circle of friends when you go right to the heart of the Lord's interests. There are many people who do not understand your doing that ; they call you foolish, you lose their confidence. They cannot believe that the way you are taking is right, and they would argue, ' Surely that is not the Lord's will for you '. Yes, you lose many friends, and you may lose many other things ; you may involve your children too—they may lose much if you are going wholly with the Lord.

But listen—" They shall be . . . a peculiar treasure ". To be a peculiar treasure to the Lord surely balances the account—nay, outweighs that. If you are going on with the Lord, it means that there are many things that you would like to have, many things quite legitimate and right, many things about which there is nothing wrong, but which, because of your utterness for the Lord, you will have to let go. And if you involve others

in the suffering and cost of it all, that is a very bitter draught from the cup. There is nothing to indicate that these people who were chosen to move into Jerusalem did not have a bit of a struggle about it, that it did not cost them something ; but the fact is that in their willingness to go on with the Lord they triumphed over all.

I think it is a wonderful thing that in the arrangement of the books of the Bible there is such a big gap between Nehemiah and Malachi, and that Malachi comes right at the end with : " They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in the day that I do make, even a peculiar treasure ". It is costly in many ways to live at the heart of the testimony. Again I say, you may be deprived of many things—good things ; you may lose a lot of friends ; you may lose a larger life of opportunity. Oh, how many have stopped, saying : ' How many doors will be closed to me if I go that way! How much wide influence I shall forfeit! I shall narrow my scope if I go that way.' And many have refused on those grounds, thinking that it was a legitimate argument to hold on to a larger scope and larger influence against the whole mind of the Lord—a wrong way of estimating values, because values are not bigness ; they are intrinsic and essential.

THE INTRINSIC VALUE OF THE PECULIAR TREASURE

And so the value that the Lord has here, as you see quite clearly, is in just a very few, comparatively. It is a " day of small things " ; it is a comparatively small company about which the Lord says, ' My peculiar treasure '. The value is intrinsic. It is there that the Lord finds what His heart desires, and that which, I believe, leads us to the far greater thing. It is not that the Lord's thought ends there in smallness because the Old Testament ends with this day of small things, this little company fearing the Lord ; but that is the link between the end of the old dispensation and the beginning of the new—the coming of the Lord Jesus and all that followed. For, in the four hundred years between the Testaments, there was still that little company holding to the Lord's full thought. When you open the New Testament, and begin the record as given by Luke, there you find that link—the little representative handful. Here is Anna, here is Simeon—here in Jerusalem is a company who wait for the promise, for the Messiah, looking for that day. They are linked with those who " feared the Lord ". Ah, but this is something that, though outwardly small, has be-

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come so intrinsically great, making a way for the Lord to come.

No, it does not end there, but the challenge lies there. How mistaken we are when we measure things by their bigness, by their numbers. That is the way the world does it. And that is where the world has come into the Church—measuring things by numbers, size, extent, what you can see, how you can appraise from natural standpoints. 'Oh, that must be something for God! Look what a big thing it is!' Not necessarily. It has often been that the greatest thing of God has been very small in the eyes of man.

We return for a moment, in closing, to the long list of names in Nehemiah xi. I expect when you have read the book of Nehemiah you have skipped this—those names, those terrible, unpronounceable names! You have said, 'Oh, let us get on to something more interesting than this!' And yet perhaps this is one of the most interesting things in the whole book. The Lord has taken note of each individual who offered himself in this way, and has marked him down by name and put him in the book; and he is not only here in this book, the Bible, and there mentioned by name for all successive generations to recognise, to identify, but he is in the other book in Heaven for all eternity. That is no small thing: to have your name down not only in the Lamb's Book of Life as one born from above, a citizen of Heaven, but in the Lord's "book of remembrance" as one who has 'followed the Lamb whithersoever He goeth', as one of a tabulated company, yes, out of all the saved, all the redeemed—this kind of firstfruits unto God.

Need we say any more? What is the appeal of these messages? That is the point at which we arrive. I trust it means comfort to you. We want all

the comfort that we can get, but we know something of the cost. How many times recently have people said to me, 'When are you going to retire? So-and-so has retired and So-and-so is retiring'—yes, ministers of the Gospel. There is no discharge in this warfare, no day for retiring, brothers and sisters, I am sorry for you! You are not going to be pensioned off down here and spend the rest of your life vegetating. You have to go on to the last breath, with battle and cost to the end. There is a cost bound up with the full purpose of God, and in many ways we know it.

But oh, the answer! The Lord is taking note; He is putting it down, and He is saying: 'That tithing, that freewill offering people, shall be My peculiar treasure in that day that I do make'. I do not know how that is going to work out, what it is going to mean. Of course, it is a picture statement: that in a great house there is something, amongst all the possessions and all the ornaments, something that is peculiarly precious to the owner, and whenever his friends come he is always showing them that. 'Have you seen this? This is most valuable. I hold it more dear than anything else I have got; indeed it is more to me than all the rest put together—a peculiar treasure.'

That is behind this. How it is going to work out I do not know, but that is what it means. Those who go this way, those who will pay this price, those who will accept these consequences, those who will be after this kind—a freewill offering to the Lord for everything that He desires and His heart is set upon—will be in His House like that. He will be drawing attention to them and saying, 'Look here, have you seen these? These are peculiarly precious to Me. They followed the Lamb whithersoever He went.'

The Lord make us like that.

T. A-S.

"THE JOURNEY IS TOO GREAT FOR THEE"

"And the angel of the Lord came the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for thee. And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God" (I Kings xix. 7, 8, A.R.V.).

THERE is something about a truly spiritual ministry which is too much even for the most energetic and devoted. It was no criticism of Elijah to say that the journey was too great for him, but rather an indication of the fact that no servant of the Lord will ever carry through his commission

to a successful consummation unless he learns to draw on resources which are more than human.

MAN'S DESPAIR AS TO GOD'S PURPOSE

It is very easy for the superficial person or the mere theorist to be glib in his criticism of Elijah under the juniper tree. Perhaps only those who are as devoted and whole-hearted as he was can truly understand how such a servant of the Lord can be brought to such an experience of emptiness and self-despair. It all arose from his very faithfulness to the Lord, and because he was having to pay the

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cost of such faithfulness. It is a strenuous life to be whole-hearted for the Lord. Elijah had lived under great strain for a long period, a strain of being hated and hunted, as well as of being hidden and often inactive. This had culminated in the tremendous climax on Carmel, when the fire fell; from that he had passed to his great triumph in persistent prayer until the rain came; and finally he had performed an amazing feat of strength, in running some twenty-five or thirty miles ahead of Ahab's chariot, all the way from Carmel to Jezreel. He had indeed been "very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts" (v. 10) and was worn out by his efforts.

What was more, he was a disillusioned man; his sufferings and prayers had brought no true deliverance to Israel, for Jezebel was still on the throne. Elijah was not one of those superficial people who could be satisfied by a wave of emotional religion and fervour like that which had taken place on Carmel. Many lesser men would have felt satisfied enough to have been the central figure in such acts of God's power as the falling of the fire and the downpour of rain; but not so Elijah. He wanted not personal vindication but the glorifying of the Lord, not a surface movement of enthusiasm but a lasting inward transformation. "Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou, Lord, art God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again" (I Kings xviii. 37). He had counted on a deep change in the heart and life of the people of God, but he did not see it and so was deeply disappointed.

Moreover he was lonely. He was not really alone, but he felt that he was, and complained—"I, even I only, am left" (v. 10). It is all too possible to feel at times as though we were having to go on alone with the Lord. True faithfulness to God sometimes involves us in situations where we do not get the sympathy or support from others which we feel we should. Or perhaps the Lord takes from us those on whom we relied, and makes us feel for the moment as though we are left all alone. God's ways with His servant Elijah were very perplexing. If there were seven thousand faithful ones in Israel, why did not some of them stand by him? Why did they lie hidden and allow him to bear all the brunt of the spiritual conflict?

It was such emotions and questions which brought Elijah to the juniper tree and to his despair about the future. He was exhausted; he had reached the limit of his endurance; he could only cry out, "It is enough"—"I am a complete failure; let me give it all up". This was not a man who had worn himself out in fleshly activities or because

of personal ambitions, but one who was an example to us all in single-hearted devotion to the will of God. Must such a man come to an end in himself? Must he have to admit that the journey is too great for him and that he cannot get through? The answer is: Yes, he must. Painful and heart-rending as the experience may be, there is no other way to Divine fulness than this way of utter emptying; in the outworking it becomes the very secret of real effectiveness. Most of us know no forty days' journey to Horeb, because we have never truly experienced what Paul calls "the answer of death within ourselves" (II Cor. i. 9): we have never had the kind of dealings with God which Elijah had under the juniper tree.

So far as Elijah was concerned it was impossible to realise God's original purpose, at any rate through him. This was no mere faltering of courage but a real sense that he had come to the end. He even dismissed his servant; he wound up the whole of their association; he felt that he was not a big enough man to stand up against all the adversaries of God's purpose; he felt himself to be a failure and concluded that his ministry was finished. It was his end. But he had yet to learn that man's end is not God's end—indeed, it is often the occasion for His new beginnings.

GOD'S ADHERENCE TO HIS PURPOSE

The Lord did not contradict Elijah's sense of personal inadequacy; indeed He confirmed it, by saying to him: ". . . the journey is too great for thee". There was an aspect of Elijah's despair which was quite right and necessary, for it meant that he had come to accept the lesson which we must all learn if we are to go right through with God, and that is the lesson of our own insufficiency. Elijah had thought that he was better than his fathers, that he would succeed where they had failed, that he would be just that much more earnest and devoted and so accomplish what his predecessors had not been able to do. But he had failed. It was quite true that he was no better than his fathers, that even he, with all his zeal, was no match for the enemies which were opposing the purpose of God. This, however, made no difference to the Lord; He had been fully aware of this when He first called the Tishbite into his service.

The Lord adheres to His original intentions. This is at least suggested by the fact that He roused Elijah at the juniper tree and sent him on to Horeb. Horeb, the mount of God, was the place where the Lord first spoke to Moses about His purposes for His people Israel. Horeb was the mountain to

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which Moses brought that people after they had been delivered from Egypt. It was the place of revelation and commission before they set out on their journey to the land of promise. Elijah's being sent to Horeb, therefore, showed that God had no intention of accepting anything less than His original purpose—He was re-affirming His first purpose and calling. It had not worked out as Elijah had expected—it seldom does. All his own ideas and energies were now exhausted. The Lord, however, does not give up, and He will not easily let us give up. He did not allow Elijah to drop out, nor did He offer him a different or an easier ministry. He had brought His servant to the place of emptiness only to make possible a new proving of heavenly resources.

We must beware of a lack of steadfastness, for it is all too easy to have a life which consists of ends and beginnings which are not real ends and not true beginnings. Elijah was not like that; he was a man of a single purpose. He was not asking to give up a work because it was hard, so that he might have something easier and more congenial. We are tempted to be like that, to leave a task when trials and difficulties arise, imagining that if we can only change our location and our ministry, we shall be able to find success at last. The Lord is not changeable—He does not lay aside unfinished tasks to take up new ones; nor, to do him justice, was Elijah. In his case there was such a sense of the hopelessness of it all that it brought him to despair. He knew that the vision was a right one, that he had not mistaken the will and purpose of God, but he was overwhelmed with the sense that the opposition had been too much for him. He was finished.

DIVINE SUFFICIENCY FOR THE PURPOSE

It was then, under the juniper tree, that Elijah had an altogether new appreciation of the greatness of his God. It may be that the Lord had been waiting for this collapse on the part of Elijah. He often does have to wait for His servants—to wait for them to lose confidence in themselves, to wait until in a new way they put all the responsibility on to Him. "Therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you" (Isaiah xxx. 18). So long as we are full of plans or natural energy, the Lord has no opportunity to show His own power and glory. It is as we die a new death that He gets occasion to show in us the glory of His resurrection power. "It is vain for you that ye rise up early, and so late take rest, and eat the bread

of toil: for so he giveth unto his beloved sleep" (Psalm cxxvii. 2). Elijah's experience seems to have been a perfect illustration of the psalmist's words.

God gave Elijah two sleeps. The first was the sleep of exhaustion, the sleep of despair. He did not want to wake up, and he did not know what he would do if he did wake up. This was followed by a meal which the Lord Himself provided, and then Elijah went off to sleep again. This time, however, it was different: it was the sleep of satisfaction, of one who 'rests in the Lord and waits patiently for Him'. When later he was at Horeb, the Lord asked him what he was doing there, but He did not ask why he was under the juniper tree. We would probably have done so: we would have remonstrated or argued; but the Lord did none of these things. He let Elijah have his sleep, and then sent the angel to touch him, and to draw his attention to the meal which Heaven had prepared and placed very near at hand.

There was a simple message in the freshly baked cake and cruse of water. It was as though the Lord was telling Elijah to leave all the responsibility with Him, to rest back in the assurance that Heaven's resources were not exhausted and that God was not giving up. Elijah was in a wilderness, but wildernesses are nothing to God; He is self-sufficient. Elijah had no friends to stand by him, but he had what was infinitely better—he had the Lord. At that moment there was no value in discussing the future, or the journey which lay ahead of him. First of all he had to be freed from all the strains and tensions of his own soul; he had to enter in a new way into the rest of faith. The sleep of despair was over; now he could lie down again and sleep in simple enjoyment of the wonderful sufficiency of his Lord.

Is not this what the Lord is after in our experiences of perplexity and emptying? He is waiting for the end of all our scheming and striving, so that He can show us new depths of the absolute sufficiency of Christ. He has not finished. He has not given up and He will not let us give up. He is going to take us right on to the full outworking of His will for us in Christ. But He allows the apparent impossibility of everything to be made very plain to us, and lets us get to the very end of all our own efforts, in order that we may taste as never before of the abundance of His grace. He wakes us up, as the angel did Elijah, and calls us to look and see that everything is fully provided in Christ: all that He wants of us for the moment is to take of that sufficiency and rest back in quiet assurance and heart-satisfaction.

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After the second sleep came a second meal. It was then that the Lord found it possible to discuss the future with Elijah—for there was a future—and to strengthen him with heavenly food for the tremendous demands which it would put on him. “Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee”. Now that Elijah had come to a place of absolute rest, he was ready to enter into a new experience of Divine strength. What a mighty meal this was! He was, of course, used to being fed by the Lord. It was no new experience for Elijah to find the Lord giving him his daily bread. By the brook Cherith he had been miraculously fed every morning and every evening, and then later in the house of the widow of Zarephath he enjoyed the unfailing provision of meal and oil. The Lord had never failed him. Nevertheless he had now come to such a critical moment in his own history, as well as in the history of his nation, that the ordinary daily experiences of God’s grace were not enough. The hour in which he lived and the demands of the journey which lay before him were such that only a special feeding on the faithfulness of his God would carry him through. It was such a meal which the Lord had provided. Precious as were those previous experiences, there was something even more precious now. This time there were no intermediaries—no ravens, no brook and no widow’s cruse. This meal seemed to come straight from the hand of God. Elijah did not have to go to find it—it found him. He only had to

reach out his hand in faith and appropriate it.

We, too, thank the Lord for His daily ministrations to us, for the food sufficient for each day. We know the miracle of being kept alive by the Lord. But we, also, may have reached a point where we need to know more of Christ’s fulness than we have ever known before; we may well feel, like Elijah, that unless we have something like that we are finished, we cannot go through. This, then, is God’s message to us. There is always new fulness in Christ to meet new needs and new prospects. The provision is right at hand. “He arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God.” Elijah was able to start anew. He was able to go on. He did not flag. “Forty days and forty nights” suggest that it was indeed a testing journey; but he went triumphantly through to the finish, and the secret was not in his own strength or determination, but in “the strength of that meat”.

It is not difficult to apply the story to ourselves. If we are not to give up, but to press right through to God’s end, we shall find, as Elijah did, what a long and difficult journey it is. We shall have to go the full “forty days and forty nights”—a journey which is, indeed, “too much” for us. Thank God that for us, too, the reality of the freshly baked cake and the cruse of water is near at hand. There is fulness of sufficiency in Christ. May we go right through “in the strength of *that* meat”.

H. F.

THE MAN GOD HAS ORDAINED

II. A PRESENTATION OF THE MAN

Reading: Revelation i, 12-17; Acts xvii, 31.

IN our previous meditation, we were occupied with the fact that it is *in* a man that God has determined to judge the world, and we were seeing something of God’s conception of the Man whom He has ordained to be the sphere and standard of His judgment. Now we are going on with that in a closer analysis, according to the characteristics of the Man as they are presented in the portion we have just read.

But first of all, I would seek to draw you strongly into the living present purpose of God in so speaking to us. I am so well aware that this can all be teaching, ideas, ‘truth’ in a technical sense. Unless we are very careful, it may just remain that, and have no great effect upon us. We tried in our

first message to bring everything into the realm of practical spiritual value, by pointing out the basis and background of all God’s thoughts, purposes and dealings with man, as found in the original Divine conception, when God said: “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness”. The first, the constant, and the final intention of God is to make man *like Himself*. And the test of everything is just there—how much we are like the Lord. It matters quite in a secondary way (and, apart from this, it matters not at all) how much teaching we give or have, or how much we do, if, governing and surrounding it all, there is not the one essential condition, that we are like the Lord and that our hearts are set more upon that than upon anything else; not upon the work, not upon the teaching, not upon the success of our efforts in Christian

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activity, but simply upon being like the Lord. In the end that is going to be the determining factor as to how far we have apprehended Christ, how far we have understood Christianity, how far we have gone on in the spiritual life. All that matters is that people should be seeing in our lives, in a growing way, *what the Lord is like*, that there should be coming into view—maybe all too slowly, maybe in all too small a measure—something of the likeness of the Lord in us. In all that follows in these messages, I do want that you should realise that that is the thing that matters—it is all unto that.

Now, if God is set upon having man like this—and He still is, for He never, in Adam's failure, abandoned the intention to make man in His own image, after His own likeness—if it is like that, with all the resultant purposes which we mentioned in our previous study, it is necessary for the Lord to show us something of what He is like. We must see what the Lord is like in order that, seeing, we may adjust to that, and then commit to the Spirit of God and press toward that attainment. So, when we come to this next part of the first chapter of the Revelation, the Man presented in His characteristics, we have the answer to that need. What is the man like that God is seeking, and has already secured in this Man—the standard, the model? What is he like?

Just one more word. In the light of what we were saying earlier as to God's intention for man, in likeness to Himself, fulfilling a tremendous vocation and then coming to eternal glory, in that we have the interpretation and the explanation of the spirit and attitude of the Apostle Paul, as we have it expressed in the third chapter of the letter to the Philippians, where, 'counting all the gains as loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord', he says that he 'presses toward the mark for the prize of the on-high calling of God in Christ Jesus'. It drew him out in that exhaustive way, in that utter way, that complete abandonment. "Not that I have already obtained . . ."; "but one thing I do . . ."; "if by any means . . .". It is not that Paul was seeking salvation, but that he had seen the meaning of Christ as God's standard and God's goal for man. He had seen what the "on-high calling" was—namely, to fellowship with Christ in the position which had been given Him by the Father.

So, you see, it is something rather important that engages us at this time—far more important than information and instruction in the Bible. It is nothing less than our very destiny, according to God's fullest intention. It is what God means

in our having a being at all—and it is possible for us to fail of it, to miss it.

CHRIST GOD'S HORIZON

Let us now come, then, to this section in Revelation i. Here is the Man who, as we said in our previous meditation, has been tested—tested down to the utter obedience of the death of the Cross. "I became dead"—He was approved by His perfect faithfulness; and as the seal of His approval He was raised—"I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death." 'Now I am in a position of absolute authority over all the forces which have been set against the fulfilment of God's purpose.'

"I am the Alpha and the Omega" (Rev. xxii. 13). That must be set at the beginning of this contemplation. "I am the Alpha and the Omega." In that word in Acts xvii. 31, "the man whom he hath ordained", the Greek word 'ordained' implies 'the man whom He has made His horizon. His scope, His sphere, His circumference, His set bound': and in the Alpha and Omega you have the bound of God, the beginning and the end. Christ governs everything from the beginning to the end; nothing is going to escape Christ, nothing is going to escape God as to Christ. That is very important; we may come on that later in a more particular way. But let it be understood that God sums up and ties up everything in Christ. There are many people who believe in God, who would call themselves 'God-fearing' people, but they leave out what Christ means, and they will not get through, they will not escape. God has made Christ the ordained one, the horizon of everything. Everything from God's standpoint is horizoned by Christ.

THE SON OF MAN

Now, having established the setting, the sphere—"I turned to see the voice . . . And having turned I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto a son of man". "*Son of man*"—that is governing. We are not going to get away from that, the Son of man. I need not remind you how often that title is used of Him, and how in the great majority of cases it was used by Himself of Himself; but it is helpful to remember how it came to be used in the first place. The title "son of man", as used by the Lord of Himself, was first introduced at the time when He was rejected by the Jews.

Prophetically, this is quite clear from the Psalms. In the second psalm, you have the

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'heathen raging', the 'rulers taking counsel together' "against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us". Then comes the the response of the Lord in Heaven to their rejecting, their casting out of the Anointed: "Yet I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will tell of the decree: Jehovah said unto me, Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee". Now that was quoted, as you know, in the prayer of the Church in Acts iv, when Herod and Pontius Pilate, the Jews and the Gentiles, combined to kill the Lord's Anointed, and Heaven responded again.

From Psalm ii to Psalm viii is not a far cry. In Psalm ii you have the rejection of this Anointed One in the first place by the Jews. In Psalm viii, you have: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him but little lower than God, and crownest him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands." Adam never was the son of man, so in no full sense can it be made to apply to him, except prophetically and symbolically. When the Jews had rejected Christ as the Anointed and combined with the Gentiles and the rulers to cast Him out and to strip off His bands from them, He is brought back, not as the Jewish Messiah, but as the Son of man, which universal title went far beyond Israel. All men are gathered into that.

"I became dead." That is the story of their rejecting and their casting out, their thinking to have done with Him. Here He appears at the beginning of the book of the Revelation: "I became dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore". "I saw . . . in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto a son of man"—not the Jewish Messiah, but the Son of man—universal representation, inclusion.

It is *man*—that is the point—the *Man* whom He has ordained. Do keep this all the time very much in mind, that what we have here is not only related to and bound up with Him as an isolated individual. He is representative of the corporate man whom God is taking out of the nations to bear His Name, and the things said here about Him are the features of that corporate man, as well as of every part of that corporate man, every individual man and woman. Keep that in mind, otherwise you will be looking at this objectively only, and it will not register anything in your own heart.

Let us now look at Him as He is given to us in John's account, fragment by fragment.

A GARMENT DOWN TO THE FOOT

The first thing is: "Clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle". "A garment down to the foot." All I am going to say about this, because it is so largely reiteration, is that this is not the priestly garment, but the governmental garment. It is the garment of the governor, of the lord, of the judge. It is the Son of man in the full place—"down to the foot"—in the full place of authority and government. It is man representative in government, corresponding to what we said in our last meditation. "Thou madest him to have dominion." The very purpose of man's creation is that he might have dominion. I simply remind you that in the letter to the Hebrews, where Psalm viii is quoted—"What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" and so on—that is linked with: "Thou crownedst him with glory and honour" (Hebrews ii, 7). "We behold him . . . Jesus . . . crowned with glory and honour"—just answering to the original intention of God.

A GOLDEN GIRDLE AT THE BREASTS

"Girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle." The girdle is, as you know, a symbol of strength for action. This One is in action, that is quite clear, and He is girded with strength for action, invested with authority and endowed with power for this administration. It is a golden girdle, depicting or symbolizing the Divine nature. And "girt about at the breasts" is His faithfulness to the purpose and will of God—His love, His faithful love. He is called in this book the "Faithful and True". (Rev. iii, 14, xix, 11).

These are spiritual features. Let us get away from the symbolism to the spiritual meaning, for we are involved in this, we are included in this. In this Son of man we are included, and if the purpose which is realised in Him as representative compasses us, includes us, the point is that *these* are the features which make up the purpose, *these* are the conditions which must obtain if God is going to reach His end in us. This is going to be applied to the churches, and here is the statement of the background against which God is working. What it amounts to is this. Here is God's inclusive thought, mind, standard; you are called with this great calling—this is the on-high calling. You have got to come into line with that, into conformity to that. What is true in Him has to be true in you, *the individual, and in the corporate, the Church.* "Girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle".

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There is to be a heart-devotion and faithfulness to the revealed thoughts of God concerning His people, concerning ourselves. There has got to be the strengthening of us by the Divine nature to stand as God's administrative instrument to the world. There must be a heart strong with faithfulness to what is according to God—gold-girdled breasts mean a heart strong in its faithful love and devotion to what is of God. We have got to be found there.

You can have all sorts of things as Christians, all sorts of Christian things; we can have all the things that the churches had, and yet find the finger of condemnation upon them, saying, 'It is not good enough, it will not do, it does not justify; with all that, I cannot let you off'. We can be very devoted to a teaching, to a movement, to any Christian work, very busy indeed in all that sort of thing; it may be very interesting or we may even be giving ourselves, pouring ourselves out to it; and yet behind it all there may be lacking some real love for the Lord Himself.

I would like to press that. It is so possible for us—oh, God forgive us, we have all failed so terribly in this matter—it is so possible for us to be poured out in the ministry, and yet to be slipping up all the time on things that are not pleasing to the Lord, our hearts not girded with the strength of a great faithful love to His thoughts. The enemy is always trying to counter our testimony by getting us to be in some way a contradiction, to be inconsistent. You find nothing like that in this One, nothing of that contradiction and inconsistency. His heart is wholly girded with faithful love to His Father's thoughts and will. Is there not a place for us to come to the Word of God a little more and see whether, after all, with all our Christian activity and devotion, the Word of God is not against us on many things?

WHITE HEAD AND HAIR

"His head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow." What is this? Well, there are two things here. In the first place, there is the mark of all time extended, exhausted, lived out. There is such a thing, of course, as premature grey-headedness; there is such a thing as becoming grey-headed or white by reason of something abnormal; but the normal grey-headedness or white hair is a mark that time has been lived out, has been covered or is being encompassed and exhausted, and for a white-headed man to be in full vigour is a testimony to the fact that he has defeated time and all that that means. In this des-

cription of the exalted Christ, therefore, the whiteness means that all that belongs to time or corruption has been destroyed. This One is not a victim of time or time's conditions, of this world or this world's corruption: He outlives it, expands it, triumphs over it. Time means death, sooner or later; death means corruption triumphant. But this One is in full vigour, girded with strength and authority and standing forth. The further description is the picture of one in full vigour, full of energy. This is not an old man worn out. This is a young man, in youth, in vigour—and white-headed. He has defeated all that time represents, death and corruption overcoming. His white hair is not a mark of old age. It is a mark of eternity triumphing over time. He is as the "ancient of days" (Dan. vii. 9).

What is the spiritual value of that? Well, you see, it means this, that the man according to God will have vigour to the end, will have spiritual energy to the end. I do not know what you feel about that, but I am in revolt against finishing up in exhaustion and emptiness, having no more to give to the Lord's people because I am too old. There may be a challenge along that line, but my spirit revolts against that. "They shall still bring forth fruit in old age" (Psalm xcii. 14). We read that "the path of the righteous is as the light of dawn, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. iv. 18, mg.). This does not imply that circumstances get easier, that the way becomes simpler and less complex, that the path becomes more and more cheerful. No, it does not imply that at all—rather the reverse. But I do believe it must mean that inwardly, while the "outward man is decaying", the "inward man is renewed day by day" (II Cor. iv. 16). That is something to claim, to lay hold of—to beat time.

So let us stop looking for sympathy by saying we are getting old. We do far too much of that. The white hair of the exalted Christ is a mark of corruption transcended in moral perfection, and that is a mark of energy.

EYES AS OF A FLAME OF FIRE

"His eyes were as a flame of fire." Here again there are two things. The eyes are the seeing organs and faculties, and this—as is borne out by a lot more that follows in this book—speaks of spiritual intelligence and knowledge. Later you will come upon seven Spirits of God. That is the perfection of spiritual intelligence, if you look at the context. And here we have the eyes, the organ, as a flame of fire. The fire searches, the fire tests,

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the fire finds out, and the One here is in a state of active knowledge. He is finding out. God will judge the world in the Man whom He has ordained, and it will be because of His perfect spiritual intelligence and the power of it.

That is not so remote as it may sound in a statement like that. When we come face to face with the Lord, with the Son of man, we know that He knows. We do not take that as a theory, as just truth. We cannot come into the Lord's presence and be alone with the Lord without knowing that He knows; that is, it is no use excusing ourselves, it is no use arguing, it is no use covering up, it is useless to try to get round. You know that He knows what you are not wanting to uncover. You are set in the light of His countenance and you cannot get away from it. His eyes not only see, but they search. They not only know, but they test. They are not merely organs, but there is something about these organs that registers on you, and you know you have to answer to the Lord. It is well for us to recognise that.

But let us still remember that this Son of man is representative. Would it not be grand if our life, our testimony, our ministry, were like this—that those whom we meet, and those who hear us, have to say, 'How did he know all about me? who has been telling him?'—and they will not believe that no one has been telling and reporting and passing on. Oh, that it might be like that in our ministry, that people have to say: 'No one could have known that about me but God; that is God who has spoken to me and dealt with me. No one knew that, that was something hidden in my life from everybody else. God only knew that, but it has been dragged out into the light.'

That is the meaning of "His eyes were as a flame of fire", and God would have something like that about us. There being those other features which have been mentioned, this should be one of the consequences, that our presence has the effect of making sinners uncomfortable, making sin incapable of remaining hidden, bringing things to the light. It will mean trouble—nevertheless it is very much better than pouring out words in addresses and teaching and nothing resulting. Oh, that God might be more in our lives to bear this naming witness against iniquity, against sin.

The eyes are linked with the other features. The eyes are connected, for instance, with the heart: for this kind of thing—these eyes as a flame, this witness, this knowing and this effecting—is by way of a pure heart. The pure in heart see God (Matt. v. 8). Effectiveness of witness is based upon purity of heart.

FEET LIKE BURNISHED BRASS

The next thing here is: "His feet like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace". Feet speak of our goings and our ways. They are the means by which we move. And what makes us move, what makes us go? There are some people who have no reason for many of their movements. They just go running about all over the place without any rhyme or reason, without any sense at all. There are a lot of people who just move by impulse. The Lord Jesus never did that. Sometimes people tried to persuade Him to move, and He would not—they could not get Him to move; sometimes they tried to get Him to go one way, and He went another; sometimes they tried to stop Him from going—and He would go.

But in His goings, His movements, His refusing to move, these feet of His were governed by a certain incentive and motive. Motive should govern our movements. Why did you do that? What is your motive? This is very searching. Why did you go and live at so-and-so, in such-and-such a place? You found a nice house there, very comfortable surroundings? Why? Either your motive is the Lord's interests, or it is your own. Why do you go to this place and that? Why these movements in your life? By what are they motivated? What is the incentive of your life?

Now, in the case of this One, this Son of man, you can see in His walk here on earth the motive and the incentive which governed. It was not the judgments of men, not the interests of the flesh, not the prizes and appeals of this world, not the shunning of suffering. He moved only under the mighty incentive of His Father's will. His feet were purged in the furnace as to their motives. The strength of His goings, like brass, was the strength of the Divine approval, because His heart was set in the ways of the Lord. Irresistible are His goings, strong because pure. Tested and tried are His motives. The Lord bring us into line with the Son of man. In all our motives and incentives, our objects and our interests, the things which influence us this way and that way, where we go, how we go, may He bring us more fully under the government of His Spirit.

A VOICE AS THE VOICE OF MANY WATERS

"His voice as the voice of many waters." I think the meaning of that is quite obvious. It speaks of power, commanding power. You cannot stand against a flood—everything has to yield and go with it. They said of Him when here that He

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spoke "as one having authority" (Matt. vii. 29). There is a *quality* about His speaking. It is not only the volume, the sound as of many waters, but there is such a quality about it. It is, in other words, not just the force of His voice; it is not that He is shouting; it is the character, the quality of it. He speaks, and because He speaks out of a pure heart, out of this utter devotion to the will of the Father, out of this life which has no motives or incentives other than to be well-pleasing unto God—because He speaks thus, He has the support of Heaven and nothing can withstand Him.

I believe our witness, our testimony, our ministry, would be much more powerful, persuasive—irresistible—if we were more like the Son of man. That is what I am getting at. If you and I want to speak with influence, with power, to speak so that something happens, it must and can only be in so far as there is Christlikeness behind the speaking, if what is said is true in the life. This matter of speaking with power is very practical. It is by the Holy Spirit in a crucified and risen man. "I became dead, . . . I am alive . . ." A crucified and risen man is the vehicle of this speaking to such effect and with such power. On the day of Pentecost, they were truly crucified and risen men; in a very real way they had been crucified with Christ and were risen together with Him; and a voice that is going to carry weight has got to be the voice of a crucified and risen man or woman. If it can be detected, when we speak to others, that there is self-glory influencing us; that, as we speak, we are influenced by any motive, any interest, any consideration other than the glory of God, the pleasure of the Lord; if it is not true, and manifestly true, in our speaking, in our preaching, in our teaching, in our talking to others, that we have been crucified to the flesh, that ours is a risen life with the Lord: if that is not true, there will be no power in our testimony, no power in our words. Power in speaking arises only from this spiritual experience of being crucified with Christ and raised together with Him.

SEVEN STARS IN HIS HAND

"He had in his right hand seven stars." The stars, He says later on, are the angels of the churches, those who have influence and power in the churches. A star is that which governs or is supposed to govern, to govern in the night. It is a subordinate governing instrument, subordinate to the sun and moon, and here the stars, these angels—whoever they may be, whatever they may

be; we will not stay to discuss that—represent the place of authority, the governmental position, which is held in the Church. He has them in His right hand, and the right hand, according to the Old Testament, is a symbol, first of all of honour and then of power. Honour and power—the two things go together. His authority to deal with the matter of government and influence is because of the honour and the power of His moral position.

A SHARP SWORD OUT OF HIS MOUTH

"Out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword." We know from other Scriptures what this two-edged sword is. It is the Word of God; its action is for laying bare, for discovering. His Word is a Word that lays open, lays bare and gets down to the inner recesses of our thoughts, our motives.

A SHINING FACE

"His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." The countenance sums up everything. It is the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 'The sun shining in its strength.' You may put up your parasol and it will destroy it! The sun shining in his strength knows no resistance, no restraint. There is no shrinking in timidity and fear on the part of the sun. There is no shame that makes it want to veil its face. There is no uncertainty about the sun. There may be about the weather!—but there is no uncertainty about the sun. He is forthright, he is downright. He has no reason to shrink, to hold back, to be afraid, to be timid. There is boldness, there is assurance, there is certainty. I think that is what is meant by the sun shining in its strength. It is terrible when you get right into the real strength of the sun. The sun shining in its strength. It is terrible when does not say, 'I am very sorry, I would not do it if I could help it'; it just does it! There is certainty, definiteness, positiveness about the sun shining in its strength.

God needs His Church like that. He wants that it should be possible to say of it: 'There is no doubt about it with them, there is no question where they are concerned; they know the Lord! If you touch them, you will get a positive note; you will find something that gets rid of all your doubt, all your uncertainty, all your questions.' Oh, for lives like that! There is so much of the deviation and the "shadow cast by turning" about us. One day you will find us all right and the next day you will find us all wrong. For a little while

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we are shining, and then our sun has gone in. You never can be sure how you will find some people, as to their spiritual life, from day to day.

This Son of man is not like that. It is a wonderful thing to go to those parts of the world where, when you get up in the morning, you do not look out to see if it is raining. You never do it. You know that, for the greater part of the year, as sure as the day comes the sun comes, and it shines. For a large part of the year in those parts of the world you do not talk about the weather. You know quite well that the sun will be there before you, if you are not very early, and that it will go on. Oh, for our lives to be like that—sure, certain, reliable, trustworthy, to be counted upon, positive, definite, real. 'The sun shining in his strength.' It is one of the glories of God that there is with Him "no variableness, neither shadow cast by turning". In all this, remember, it is the Son of man to whom we are to be conformed.

THE EFFECT OF SEEING CHRIST

And finally, the effect. "When I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead." Now two things must be linked together. John commenced by saying: "I was in the Spirit". He finished this presentation by saying: "I fell at his feet as one dead". What is the effect of this contemplation? What is the

verdict? If you are in the Spirit, there will be an effect in the contemplation of Jesus Christ. There must be something as a result. "I was in the Spirit . . . I fell at his feet as one dead." What do you say about this? I am not saying that my presentation is as good as John's, I am not saying that I am as inspired as he was, but we have been contemplating the same Lord, we have been seeking to bring Christ into view—His excellencies and glories and what He means for us. Can we be other than deeply affected? Is there not something challenging that brings us down inwardly before the Lord? 'Am I not found out? Am I not smitten? Do I not realise how altogether short of this I come? Do I not see that it is unto this that the Lord has called? Am I not moved to make my calling and election sure? Is there not the inspiring of something of that "one thing I do . . . I press on toward the goal" (Phil. iii. 13, 14)?'

What is the effect? What is our verdict? A mental judgment upon the subject, the subject matter, the presentation? What is it? We have failed—I have failed, you have failed—if we are not touched deeply in our hearts over this and come down before the Lord to make the necessary adjustment. If we are not moved with a new incentive to be like Him, it is all a failure. God forbid! If it is not so with you, will you ask the Lord to use the sword, the two-edged sword, to lay bare?

T. A-S.

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

THE MAN WITH A BAD CONSCIENCE

MR. Johnson felt sad, and he looked sad—very sad. And no wonder, for one of the young men in his training school had been cheating. Mr. Johnson had charge of a small school in a South American country town. The men had come from various parts of that country to study, so that they might serve the Lord among their own people, and he had done his best to help them. He looked again at the evidence before him. If only he were mistaken! If only it were not true! But alas! it was true, all right. How he hated to have to admit it! But there was no doubt that one of his students had cheated. He began to wonder which of them it was, but soon checked himself. It was no use wondering; he must call for a public confession.

So he told the students all to come together, and then he asked that the one who had done the wrong should own up. As he waited for the guilty young man to confess his sin, Mr. Johnson's heart was heavy, but it grew heavier still when he found

that none of them would admit that he had done it. He spoke to the students, he prayed with them, he urged that the one who had acted a lie should now say so; but it was all in vain. Still there was silence. He knew that only one was guilty, but as he did not know which one it was, the whole school was in disgrace. He was at his wit's end. He even wondered whether he would have to send them all away and close down the school.

Just then one of the most trusted students came forward and asked if he might put a simple test to them all. He told Mr. Johnson that he was sure that the test would show clearly who was in the wrong. When he was given leave, he went straight to a nearby field and brought back 20 blades of grass, which he then cut to exactly the same length. He handed one blade to each of the other 19 and kept the last one for himself, taking care that all should see that the pieces were equal in length. Then very solemnly he said, 'It may be that the

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man who has not told the truth will find that tomorrow morning his blade of grass will be longer than all the others. Let us keep our pieces of grass through the night and see what happens. Tomorrow morning we will bring them together again, and if one blade is longer than the rest we shall know who is in the wrong.'

Mr. Johnson thought that this seemed very silly, and at first did not want to agree to it; but as he had nothing else to suggest, he felt it best to wait and see. The morning came, and the 20 young men all met together to compare their grasses. As each came forward to lay his piece of grass alongside of the others, it seemed that nothing had happened, and that all would turn out to be just as they had seen them the night before. But no! there *was* a difference! Mr. Johnson had never expected to see anything but 20 pieces of grass each exactly the same in size, but he had a very great surprise. It is true that none of the blades was longer: but one of them was different—it *was shorter than all the others!*

All knew then who was the culprit. The owner of the shorter grass was made to stand forward, for it was he who had acted a lie.

What do you think made the grass shorter? Well, it arose out of a bad conscience. While the others slept, he had kept awake, troubled by the inner voice which would not let him rest. He knew that he had cheated, and he really began to believe that perhaps his blade of grass might show him up by growing longer during the night. He became so worried about it that he felt he must do something to hide his sin. When the first light came, he took out his piece of grass and looked at it. Was it any longer? The more he looked at it, the more he felt sure that it was. Really it had

not changed at all, but to his guilty senses it seemed longer. He felt that there was only one thing to do, so he took out his penknife and cut a small piece off one end. That looked better. He felt now that his sin would be hidden, and that his piece of grass would now be the same size as the 19 which belonged to the other students who had good consciences. Then he lay down again to wait for the morning.

That is why his blade of grass was different from the rest, and that is how he was found out. It was his own bad conscience which gave him away. The test was a very simple one—at least it was for those who knew that they had done no wrong; but to the one who had sinned it brought worry and fear. He dared not face it. His action in cutting off a tiny piece from his blade of grass showed that he had a bad conscience. After this he could only confess his fault, and had to leave the school.

There are many verses of the Bible which can be used to end this true story. There is, for example, the one which says: "Be sure your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32. 23). How true this proved to be in his case! Then there is the verse which warns us that: "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Proverbs 28. 13). This verse is not only a warning, but also a promise, and so it points us on to the Gospel, where a bad conscience can find its cure.

The Gospel tells us that, if we do not try to hide our sins, but confess them to the Lord Jesus, and trust in Him, we shall find that He can cleanse us from all our sense of guilt. He suffered for our sins, and is able to give us forgiveness and the great blessing of "the answer of a good conscience toward God" (1 Peter 3. 21).

H. F.

"THIS IS THE VICTORY"

"THIS IS THE VICTORY THAT HATH OVERCOME THE WORLD, EVEN OUR FAITH" (1 JOHN V. 4)

"O LORD, WHY . . . ?"

"O Lord, HOW LONG shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear? I cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save. WHY dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to look upon perverseness? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there is strife, and contention riseth up.

"Thou that art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and that canst not look on perverseness, WHEREFORE lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy peace when the

wicked swalloweth up the man that is more righteous than he . . . ?

"I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will look forth to see what he will speak with me, and what I shall answer concerning my complaint. And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for the appointed time, and it hasteth toward the end, and shall not lie: though it tarry, WAIT for it; because it will surely come, it will not delay. Behold, his soul is puffed up, it is not up-

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right in him: but THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY HIS FAITH" (*Habakkuk i. 2-3, 13; ii. 1-4*).

"THE burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see." These words are all we have by way of introduction to his book. They constitute little more than a 'title-page' and tell us virtually nothing of Habakkuk. We do not know who he was, when he lived or for whom he wrote. As we read on, however, we do learn one thing about him. It is that he was a man with some tremendous questions. "O Lord, how long . . . ? Why . . . ? Wherefore . . . ?" These were the cries to God of his troubled heart, cries drawn out by a contemplation of conditions around him: and do they not find an echo in the heart of many a thoughtful Christian to-day who is confronted, as was Habakkuk, with the mystery of the world's evil?

For his were deeply perplexing questions, and they went to the root of things, touching as they did the very moral character of God Himself. The prophet begins by appealing to God on account of the social evils, the iniquity and oppression that were apparently rife among his own people in his day. To this God replies that He is about to raise up the Chaldeans, "that bitter and hasty nation", to be His instrument of judgment upon the oppressors. But that at once presents a more acute problem for Habakkuk, who knows the Chaldeans to be even worse than the evils they are sent to punish, and he comes back to God with a far more serious inquiry. How can He, who in His purity has pronounced judgment upon evil, make use of a wholly pagan instrument, and one so manifestly wicked, to carry out His sovereign purposes?

It is a question that reaches right down into our own times. We speak often with humiliation of the moral evils of our day and of the spiritual bankruptcy and death among the people of God, and we may even recognise that God must one day move out in discipline and judgment upon that which bears His Name and yet so manifestly fails to represent Him. But when the blow falls, and all that at least *seemed* to stand for God is overwhelmed and lost beneath a far worse flood of iniquity, the cry is wrung from us, "Thou that art of purer eyes than to behold evil . . . wherefore lookest thou . . . and holdest thy peace?"

Now we do not find that Habakkuk receives an immediate answer to his question. The thing to note is the attitude that he takes. "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon my tower, and will look forth to see what he will speak with me, and what I shall answer concerning my complaint."

What he means is this. 'On the natural, human level of approach to these questions I am getting nowhere. God is not providing me with an answer that, by appealing to my reason, leaves all my intellectual problems solved. No! the answer must be sought at a higher level. I will get up there on to a new plane of vision and see what God has to show me from that viewpoint.'

What we have here is the difference between the natural and the spiritual approach to Divine things: the difference between all enlightenment on the merely human plane of intellect and the vision accorded to the God-anointed eyes of faith. Paul draws this distinction in I Corinthians ii, 14, 15 (A.V.): "Now the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual discerneth all things."

And it is here that God meets His servant. "The Lord answered me," says Habakkuk, and he goes on to speak of a vision that can be set down in terms so simple as to be read at a glance, and yet whose meaning will become fully clear only at "the appointed time". God recognises, as the prophet learns, only two classes of men: the crooked, whose "soul is not upright (or straight) in him", and the just (or righteous), of whom it is said that he "shall live by his faith".

These last words meant, in the language of Habakkuk's day, that the man who demonstrated his trust in God by his faithfulness toward Him, would find in turn that God was faithful in preserving him in safety through whatever judgment He might permit to fall upon His people. "The just shall live by His faithfulness" is another quite legitimate translation of this great prophetic statement.

Now we know of course that Habakkuk never lived to see the wonderful unfolding of this vision that we have in the New Testament; and that we shall now go on to examine. He affords us therefore an example of the man whose spiritual eyes have been opened to catch but a glimpse of the Divine plan, and yet for whom that glimpse proves altogether sufficient to carry him through the particular problems of his day. God's word to him is not, 'See how perfectly all your questions have been answered in detail and your doubts removed.' It is: 'Wait . . . ! Though the vision tarry, though the fulfilment of what you have seen be long delayed, wait . . . ! Yes, wait for it. It will certainly come, and when at length it does come you will have no more problems. For then you will see. Faith will have made way for sight!'

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

(I) "THE JUST . . ."

"So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you also that are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is revealed a righteousness of God by faith unto faith: as it is written, BUT THE RIGHTEOUS SHALL LIVE BY FAITH, For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

"Being therefore JUSTIFIED BY FAITH, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ . . . God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him.

"For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous. . . . that, as sin reigned in death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans i. 15 - 18; v. 1, 8 - 9, 19, 21).

The words spoken by God to Habakkuk in his extremity are taken up three times in the New Testament, and are allied to the solving of three fundamental human problems. They are problems familiar to every genuine seeker after God and to all who have set themselves truly to walk with Him.

The first is found in Paul's letter to the Romans. It is the problem of man's sin, and it had already been well stated centuries earlier by a certain Bildad the Shuhite, one of Job's sympathizers, who put it in the following way: "How . . . can man be just before God? Behold, even the moon hath no brightness, and the stars are not pure in his sight: how much less man . . . !" (Job xxv. 4 - 6).

But Paul, in his letter, comes to the problem as one to whom God has already supplied the answer, and who desires to give it the widest publicity. He is not ashamed of the gospel of Christ because he has found it to be the full and sufficient answer to his need; indeed, apart from it there was no way out of his predicament. "It is," he says, "the power of God unto salvation," and by that he means that God has taken steps to do something about the sin question, and that what He has done is adequate to meet the situation.

For Paul does not underestimate the magnitude of the problem. "The wrath of God" he says, "is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and

unrighteousness of men", and he knows only too well that there is no escape for him from the embrace of that "all". It is not merely a question of what he has done—of the many and varied sins he has committed in God's sight. They are bad enough, it is true, but, like Bildad, he recognises that the root of the problem lies deeper, in the very nature of "man that is born of woman". By the simple, irrevocable fact of his birth into the human line, he was constituted a sinner, having an inborn capacity and inclination for sinning quite apart from any use he may later have made of that capacity. The "law of sin" is in his members, whether or not he yields them as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin. For Romans v. 19 says (and this is a key verse in Paul's argument) that "through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners."

It is a verdict from which there is no escape. "Through one trespass the judgment came unto all men to condemnation" (Rom. v. 18), and you and I come under the ban of that by the simple process of being born. How, then, can a man be just before God? Paul appreciates that, in this matter, above all, we, in ourselves, are helpless.

But Romans chapter v does not stop at the diagnosis, thorough and revealing though that is. It goes on to prescribe the remedy. Verses 6 to 9 face squarely the fact of our weakness, and then go on to tell us what God has done about it. He has come to our help. "For while we were yet weak, in due season Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him".

'Being now justified . . . we shall be saved'. How? Through Christ. The gospel of which Paul boasts brings the Lord Jesus Christ into view as God's full answer to the problem of sin in man. He is "the Holy and Righteous One" who became "obedient even unto death", and whom God then raised from the dead to the place of highest honour (Acts iii. 14, 15; Phil. ii. 8, 9). He is Jehovah's "righteous servant" who, by bearing their iniquities, "shall justify many" (Isaiah liii. 11). It is He, "Jesus Christ the righteous", who is now our Advocate (Helper) with the Father, pleading His precious Blood as the sufficient price of our redemption.

But—and this is perhaps the supreme discovery—it is His righteousness, too, which becomes

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available to us to constitute us righteous who before were by nature sinners. Our key verse, Romans v. 19, which designates us sinners on the ground of heredity, does not leave the matter there. It points us on from the dread consequences of Adam's act of independence to the blessed counter-effect produced by the course of action chosen by that other One. "For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous." Jesus Christ provides in *Himself* the perfect righteousness for us all, for through His "one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification of life" (Rom. v. 18).

It is true that this has proved a stumbling-block to some, who have felt it to be essential that they should somehow provide God with a basis upon which they might be accepted. Like the Pharisee in the story, their argument has been that *comparatively* they are not too bad. Desiring somehow to justify themselves, and being ignorant of God's righteousness, they have set out to establish a righteousness of their own (Rom. x. 3) on the basis of their own comparative merit. "I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I get" (Luke xviii. 11). Yes, and when all that is taken into account, what have you achieved? In God's eyes, *nothing!* You plead that you are "not unjust", but the question is: Are you justified? And God's answer is, No! "I

say unto you, This man went down to his house justified rather than the other." Which man? The one who knew himself for what he really was: a sinner, and thus utterly incapable of presenting God with any ground of righteousness whatever. It is the cry to God for mercy that opens the way for the revelation of His free gift. "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness" (Rom. iv. 5).

When Paul speaks of "the gift of righteousness" (Rom. v. 17), he means that, in just the same way as we inherited unrighteousness willy-nilly from our first forefather who pioneered for us the way of sinners, so, when we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and are born again into the family of God, we are found standing before God's tribunal as justified in His eyes with a righteousness that is *not our own*. He means, further, that the risen life of our great Forerunner is planted now within us, that henceforth our members may become servants of righteousness unto holiness (Rom. vi. 19). And the wrath of God, so terrible and yet so well-deserved, has given way to a peace with God which, from now on, is the experience of those who have been justified by faith (Rom. v. 1).

What, then, has the gospel of Christ revealed? Whom does God recognise as "the just"? It is he who has received as a free, unmerited favour a righteousness that is of God by faith (Rom. i. 17). He has been made righteous in the Righteous One.

A. I. K.

(To be concluded)

WE BEHELD HIS GLORY

(CHAPTER VII OF VOL. II)

THAT part of the Gospel by John which we have now reached has come to be known under two titles: 'The High Priestly Prayer' and 'The Holy of Holies'. We might well combine them and speak of John xvii as 'The High Priest in the Holy of Holies'. This chapter stands with the most sacred, beautiful, heart-searching, profound and awe-inspiring chapters of the whole Bible. There is no fathoming its depths or exhausting its fulness. Marcus Rainsford has written a book of 454 pages on this chapter alone, and yet we feel that he has only touched the surface. Certainly we can do no more here than seek to underline the main message and emphasize the essential challenge.

When we speak of this prayer as that of the High Priest in the Holy of Holies we are not alto-

gether right. What we mean is that we are allowed to hear the innermost converse between the Son and His Father; the most sacred and intimate breathings of His heart in the most solemn communion of the nearest place to God. But as to the actual position occupied at that moment, He had not yet reached the Holy of Holies, for the sacrifice had not yet been offered, nor the blood shed. We should therefore be more correct to refer to this as—

THE PRAYER BESIDE THE ALTAR

Christ had already taken the place of the Jewish Feasts, the Temple, the Vine, etc. Now here He takes the place of the High Priest. He is about to offer the Whole Burnt Offering, wholly and

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utterly set apart to God ('consecrated', v. 19). He will seal His intercession with His own Blood.

The predominating words in any given part of the Bible always notify and indicate the immediate subject or message. It is not difficult, indeed it is very easy, to recognise such words here. They distinctly denote three things.

(1) The glory of the Father and the Son, and that glory imparted to the disciples: verses 1, 5, 10, 22, 24.

(2) The oneness of the Father and the Son; of the disciples and the Son and the Father; and of the disciples themselves: verses 21, 22, 23.

(3) The world. While it is true that the Lord says that He prays not for the world, there is much that indicates a real concern that the world should be convinced to the point of believing. "That the world may believe . . .": verses 21, 23.

The more we meditate upon these three things above mentioned, in the light of other things said by Jesus, the more convinced we shall be that they are not three things at all, but one.

The glorifying of the Father and the Son, and the effectual testimony of the Church to the world, will be by the reality of unity or oneness in that Body.

But it is imperative and essential that we understand the meaning and nature of both glory and union. These two go together and are inseparable.

Because the matter is not mentioned specifically by name in this prayer, it might be thought to be either irrelevant or importing something not inherent when we say that, both through our Lord's own words recorded in this Gospel and in much of the New Testament,—

THE GLORIFYING OF THE FATHER AND THE SON IS IN RESURRECTION

If this is truly so, as we shall show it to be, then it would not be irrelevant if our Lord, with His Cross and death immediately before Him, in beginning His prayer with "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that the Son may glorify thee," had resurrection definitely in mind. This surely is borne out by such further thoughts as: "Glorify thou me . . . with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (v. 5), and: "I am no more in the world . . . I come to thee" (v. 11), and: "Father, that which thou hast given me, I will that, where I am, they also may be with me; that they may behold my glory . . ." (v. 24).

If we look elsewhere in this Gospel we shall find two very explicit instances of the uniting of

glory with resurrection. In chapter xi the raising of Lazarus is definitely and positively said to be "for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified . . ." In chapter xii the enquiry of certain Greeks to see Jesus draws from Him firstly the statement: "The hour is come" (note these words again in the prayer of chapter xvii) "that the Son of man should be glorified"; then the simile of the grain of wheat dying and rising in much fruitfulness. All that immediately follows in the context is instructive in this relationship.

If glory is the expression of the satisfaction of Divine nature with Divine work—as it truly is—then resurrection is the Divine attestation that God's nature is wholly satisfied, and glory follows.

Then we have to take the second step.

THE GROUND OF RESURRECTION IS THE GROUND OF ONENESS

If oneness is the basis of the glorifying of the Father and the Son, then this oneness is projected beyond the Cross to the ground of resurrection. Those who are to bear testimony, by their oneness, to the glory of God, are those who stand—firstly on the ground of the full satisfaction of the Divine nature in what the Son did at the Cross, and then in the oneness of a new life in resurrection. There is no glory without the perfect sacrifice and work of the Cross. There is no glory until that has been attested by God's unique act of resurrection. There is no oneness, no unity (of the kind for which Christ prayed), until those concerned have entered experimentally and actually into the meaning of the Cross—substitutionally and representatively—and into the power and life of the Risen Lord!

How true this was in the case of the disciples themselves!

That leads to the third step.

ONENESS IS ORGANIC, AS BEING A MATTER OF ANOTHER LIFE

The unity envisaged in Christ's prayer can never be organized, arranged, agreed upon, or in any way brought about, by men. On the other hand, it is nonsense to talk about "that they all may be one" and be committed to any man-made association which insists that there is an essential and basic distinction between itself and all others. Vested interests in Christian activities are one of the main causes of disunity.

The unity of John xvii is the unity of one life. That life is *not* the life of the natural man, how-

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ever religious and devout. It is the life—with its nature and energy—of One who, taking the place of the natural ('soulical') man, put *that* man away as having no acceptance with God, and, having done so, lives as another order of man in God's pleasure. Hence, oneness is only "*in Christ*", and by His resurrection life overcoming the rejected man that was.

The history of all divisions is the demonstration of one fact: that, somewhere, somehow, the life and power of "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" has been thwarted by the asserting of the life which was condemned and executed representatively at the Cross of Christ.

But—Jesus prayed, and a vast multitude has come into—at least the beginning of—the answer.

His new and other life has been received by that multitude all down the centuries, and when we meet on the ground of Christ alone, closing our eyes to the extras or deficiencies—the more or less than the fulness and aloneness of Christ—there is that in each which makes a spontaneous response to the other. Christ is ours and we are Christ's!

What a joy it is to meet a Christ-indwelt person in this Christless world! And what blessing flows, what *glory* warms the heart,—until—until we bring up that which never had its origin or source in His

resurrection, but came in later through man's unspirituality. Then the shadow creeps over and the glory fades.

What is the upshot of it all?

Let Christ be our only and utter interest. Be prepared to put our "Christian" *things* aside if they should in the slightest degree threaten the glory.

Thus, then, and only thus, will the Church register a convincing impact upon the world, and be "terrible as an army with banners".

"Father . . . glorify thy Son . . ."

"O Father, glorify thou me . . ."

"Holy Father, keep them . . ."

"I pray . . . that thou shouldst keep them . . ."

"I pray . . . that they may all be one . . .
that the world may believe . . ."

"that they may be one . . . ;
that they may be perfected into one ;
that the world may know . . ."

"that they may behold my glory . . ."

"O righteous Father . . .
that the love wherewith thou lovedst me may
be in them, and I in them."

T. A-S.

A GREAT WARFARE

STUDIES IN BUNYAN'S "HOLY WAR" VI

(Conclusion)

'Remember, therefore, O my Mansoul, that thou art *beloved of me* : as I have, therefore, taught thee to watch, to fight, to pray, and to make war against my Foes, so now I command thee to *believe that my Love is constant to thee*. O my Mansoul, *how have I set my Heart, my Love upon thee!* Watch! Behold, I lay none other burden upon thee than what thou hast already. *Hold fast till I come.*'

WITH these strong, loving, words from the lips of Emmanuel, Bunyan closes his history of the "Holy War", and it now remains for us, in this our concluding study, to round off, to sum up, and to hear the conclusion of the matter. Of course, the War will still go on, as far as we are concerned—very much so! We shall continue to experience the overwhelming strength of the enemy—and also to find that the Lord is Greater. We shall be tested to breaking point, that 'patience may have its perfect work' and that we "may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing" (James i. 4). But the Lord

will always have the last word, and that will be life and resurrection for us. The need will remain of our co-operation with the grace of life, moment by moment, and that immense work of recovery to which the Lord has set His hand will go on in the face of all the enemy can do, until Heaven's 'glorious design' for Mansoul is accomplished, and it is 'a Spectacle of wonder, a Monument of mercy, and the Admirer of its own mercy.'

From the many things which we might still consider with profit (there seems to be no end to Bunyan's treasure-house!), we must now select a few for our closing consideration. Time would fail to tell of *Emmanuel's* shining *Livery*, which the Mansouliaus put on 'according to their size and stature'; nor can we speak of how the Town 'minded her *trade* that she had with the Country that was afar off' and of how she 'was busy in her *Manufacture*'. The story of the 'three young fellows that had a mind to go for soldiers' must wait upon our interest. Their names, of course, were

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Mr. Tradition, Mr. Human-Wisdom, and Mr. Man's-Invention: 'proper men they were, and men of courage and skill, to appearance.' We must also pass by the armoury of Diabolus, where he furnished enslaved Mansoul with such pieces as the *Breastplate of a hard heart*, and the *Shield of Unbelief*. To Bunyan we must go for the full story of how *Mr. Conscience* became Junior Minister and Under-Secretary to the *Lord Chief Secretary*: of how this *most noble Secretary* helped the Town to draw up its petition to Emmanuel, and of His close friendship with *Captain Credence*. Time indeed would fail to tell of the *heavenly food* and *music* that Emmanuel brought with Him into Mansoul; of the 'curious Riddles of secrets drawn up by his Father's Secretary'; of how the roaring of *Diabolus' Drum* was answered by the melodious *Silver Trumpets*; of how Lord *Reason* was wounded in the *Head*; of how the wounded *Captain Experience* went out to battle *on his crutches*, to the dismay of the enemy; and of much more besides.

We must turn now to consider a few of Bunyan's so pregnant phrases.

'SPY OUT THE WEAKNESS OF THE TOWN'

The enemy is particularly interested in our weak points! Diabolus, bent upon regaining Mansoul, writes as follows to his allies within:

'Endeavour to spy out the weakness of the Town of Mansoul. Send us word also by what means you think we had best to attempt the regaining thereof: namely, whether by *persuasion to a vain and loose Life*; or, whether by *tempting them to Doubt and Despair*; or, whether by *blowing up the Town by the Gunpowder of Pride and Self-conceit*.'

The reply he received runs as follows:

'We have concluded, that though to blow them up with the Gunpowder of Pride would do well, and to do it by tempting them to be Loose and Vain will help on, yet to contrive to *bring them into the gulf of Desperation* we think will do best of all. And of all the Nations that are at your whistle, we think that *an army of Doubters* may be the most likely to attack and overcome the Town of Mansoul.'

Bunyan is, of course, writing out of his own history. For long years he was assailed by doubts, terrible doubts as to whether he had any part with Christ; doubts as to his election (he tells us that the *Election-Doubters* were the *life-guard of Diabolus*); doubts as to his calling; doubts as to his

salvation. His whole life was overshadowed by a terrible question-mark; he had no assurance of salvation. But this is the point: Bunyan did not realise *then* that the enemy was playing him up and concentrating on his weak spot. He was inclined to be introspective and melancholy, and the enemy knew it. That is why he employed his army of terrible Doubters against him, and that is why we find this particular form of assault in the 'Holy War'. If Bunyan had been of, say, 'the proud type', the story would doubtless have gone differently, and we should have found the enemy concentrating upon the use of the Gunpowder of Pride for the destruction of the Town.

Here, surely, is something of great importance. The enemy knows *us*, and he will adapt his method of assault according to our vulnerability. Are we inclined to introspection and continually falling under condemnation? Then the enemy will keep us very busy with our wretchedness, and put us out of the fight in *that way*. Are we impulsive? Then he will trap us through our impulsiveness. Are we placid by nature? Then the enemy will lull us into a soul-destroying complacency. Are we among the light-hearted and easy-going? Then a spirit of superficiality will be our undoing. Of one thing we can be certain: *the enemy will play upon our weaknesses, our temperaments, our make-up*. Have we not all proved it again and again? Take the story of Samson, and watch the enemy plot his undoing; or take the history of Peter, and see him trapped in the net of his own impetuosity. What shall we do then? Let us ask the Lord to make us wise to our own vulnerable points and strong to abide in Him who has none.

'INVENTING A WAY TO MAKE THEM SIN'

The enemy's objective is to obtain and maintain a foothold *in us*. His ground in the saints is the measure of his strength in them. Our "flesh" is his ground: hence the great importance of the Lord's word in Romans vi and kindred passages. Satan has a great deal of ground, a terrible foothold, in every one of us by nature; but the glory of Romans vi. 6 is this, that the Cross has robbed him of his ground, and we are now "alive unto God in Christ Jesus". Of course, while we remain in this world, the enemy will always have *potential* ground in us, but he need have no *actual* ground in us. While the *possibility* of sin will remain to the end, the *need* to sin has gone for ever.

Now, it was for this reason that Diabolus was so concerned to invent ways in which to make Mansoul sin. Through sin the Town would become

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linked up with him, and provide him with a standing within it; further, sin would keep Emmanuel at a distance. How deeply we need to realise that only as we are separated from Satan and his kingdom by the Blood and the Cross, can God be with us. God cannot be with us if we are in any way co-operating with His enemy. Let us listen to Bunyan's record of the counsels of hell:

'And this I will tell you, that two or three Diablonians, if *entertained* and *countenanced* by the Town of Mansoul, will do more to the keeping of Emmanuel from them, and towards making the Town your own, than can an Army of a legion . . . *but this must be done by time*'.

'There is no way to bring them into bondage to us, like inventing a way to make them sin . . . you know Mansoul is a Market-town; what if some of our Diablonians feign themselves far-country men, and bring to the Market *some of our wares to sell*? May we not, by this means, so cumber Mansoul with abundance, that they shall be forced to make of their Castle a *Warehouse*? Thus, if we get *our goods* thither, I reckon that the Castle is more than half ours.'

What shall we do then, in face of such insidious intrigue? Let us abide in Him in whom the enemy has no foothold; let us abide in the emancipating power of His Cross; let us trust the Lord in His mercy and faithfulness to uncover to us any ground that the enemy may have or get in our lives, and let us be swift to take such ground from him. Only as we abide in Him, and cleave to one another in Him, as one body, one family, will the enemy be stripped of his power to make havoc of our lives and of our life together as the Church.

" . . . *that no advantage may be gained over us by Satan: for we are not ignorant of his devices*" (II Cor. ii. II).

'REMEMBER MY CAPTAINS; NOURISH THEM, MY MANSOUL'

Here is the positive side. Not only must we watch to see that the enemy gains no ground in our 'flesh', but we must nourish, encourage and co-operate with the Heavenly Captains, that is, with the *energies of divine life* resident in us. What we have said before, we say again: that *the Christian life is a holy communion between the grace of God and us*. While, on the one hand, the Lord will take great pains to deliver us from everything of self-effort, on the other He will always be seeking to draw us out in *co-operation*. He wants our co-operation and He needs it. It is a solemn thought that we have power over our destinies—that is, that

we may despise or neglect our calling and resources in Christ. How easy it is for the spiritual life to become "choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life". How many of the Lord's people are languishing spiritually as the result of neglecting their life with the Lord, their calling in Him, or their life in His family, or both. Such neglect is always disastrous; we thereby weaken Emmanuel's Captains, and quench the Spirit. Let us listen again to Emmanuel's charge to Mansoul as recorded by Bunyan:

'These Captains are your Fence and your Guard, your Wall, your Gates, your Locks, and your Bars. If they be weak, Mansoul cannot be strong; if they be strong, then Mansoul cannot be weak: *your safety*, therefore, doth lie in *their health*, and in your countenancing them. Remember also that if they be sick, they catch that disease of the Town itself.

'Thou seest what a Company of my Father's host I have lodged within thy borders; Captains and Rulers . . . they are my Servants, and thine, too, Mansoul. Yea, my design of possessing of thee with them, and the natural tendency of each of them, is to defend, purge, strengthen, and sweeten thee *for myself* . . .'

'Remember my Captains; nourish them, my Mansoul.'

May the Lord open our eyes, and show us how to sow to the *Spirit* and to co-operate with the grace of life.

" . . . *whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life*" (Gal. vi. 7, 8).

'FAST JOYND TOGETHER'

This descriptive little phrase comes in Bunyan's beautiful account of Mansoul's beginnings, where we read—

'There was not a Rascal, Rogue, or Traitorous person then within its Walls: They were all true men, and *fast joynd together*; and this, you know, is a *great matter*'.

Truly, *unity, harmony*, is a 'great matter'! Sin has brought discord into the universe and into our hearts. We, by nature, are out of tune with God, with ourselves and with one another. Grace is at work to restore the unity and harmony. In ourselves we are just one great discord, a bundle of divided loyalties, an agony of irreconcilable interests. Only in Christ, and as we are centred in Him,

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do our lives know any unity and harmony and order. The Lord Jesus embodies Heaven's harmony—a Man in tune with God; a Man with a united heart, with no inward conflict; a Man poured out for others in self-less love. Oh! the effectiveness of such a life—and of such a Church! Small wonder the enemy spends so much of his time creating chaos, disunity and discord. Well do we pray with David: “*Unite my heart to fear thy name*” (Ps. lxxxvi. 11). Well do we seek with Paul “to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. iv. 3). Listen again to Bunyan's description of Mansoul when *Mr. God's-Peace*, one of Emmanuel's Officers, presided over all:

‘Now there were no jars, no chiding, no interferences, no unfaithful doings in all the Town of Mansoul; every man in Mansoul kept close to *his own employment*. The Gentry, the Officers, the Soldiers, and all in place, *observed their order*. And as for the Women and Children of the Town, they followed their business joyfully: they would *work and sing*, work and sing, from morning till night: so that quite through the Town of Mansoul now, *nothing was to be found but Harmony, Quietness, Joy, and Health.*’

‘THOU DECEIVING ONE
DIDST PUT THE LIE UPON MY FATHER’

The enemy in the rôle of slanderer is a notable feature of the ‘Holy War’. He delights to slander the Lord, to insinuate as to His motives, to cast doubts upon His love to us, to misinterpret His ways; in a word, to make the Lord out to be what He is not, to ‘put the lie upon Him’. We need to be very alive to this device, especially as the war draws on to its climax and close. The enemy is never more pleased than when he has managed to bring a cloud over our relationship with the Lord. If he can succeed here we are an easy prey.

When Diabolus assaulted Mansoul at the first, he made out that the Town was being kept in ignorance and slavery and poverty by an unreasonable tyrant. How many people have swallowed Satan's lie and think of God in this way!

Then, when Diabolus was entrenched in the Town and heard that Shaddai was on the move for its recovery, he lied again in these words: ‘your old King Shaddai is raising of an Army to come against you, to destroy you root and branch . . . do not believe him upon any terms.’ What a master of misinterpretation is Satan!

Then again, when Mansoul had sinned and Emmanuel had temporarily withdrawn, Diabolus came again with these sinister suggestions:

‘Do you hope, do you wait, do you look for Help and Deliverance? You have sent to Emmanuel, but your Wickedness sticks too close in your skirts, to let innocent Prayers come out of your lips. You will fail in your wish, you will fail in your attempts; for it is not only I, but your *Emmanuel is against you*: yea, it is he that hath sent me against you to subdue you. For what, then, do you hope? or by what means will you escape?’

How the enemy loves to take hold of our failures and our experiences of chastening, and to make us feel God-forsaken, that the Lord is against us! No way to paralyse us like this! Oh! *let us settle it in our hearts*, that the Lord is *always for us* if we are cleaving to Christ, having no plea but His precious Blood. Let us beware of that paralysing lie that hints otherwise, and listen to Emmanuel's command—

‘BELIEVE THAT MY LOVE IS CONSTANT TO THEE’.

‘LIVE UPON MY WORD’

‘Nor must thou think always to live *by Sense*: thou must *live upon my Word*. Thou must believe, O my Mansoul, when I am from thee, that yet I love thee, and bear thee upon my Heart for ever.’

As we walk by faith with the Lord, oft-times we have to pass through dark places where we cannot see Him; He is veiled from sight. It is at these times, when we *seem* to be alone, that we must learn to live in simple trust upon His Word, His promises. Such times are part of our *training in trustworthiness*. It is a great thing to be able to rise above our feelings, our fears and our problems. *Old Evil-Questioning* so frequently stalks our hearts; we must hang him. Or perchance it is his child, *Live-by-Feeling*, who is troubling us. Let us take note that he was arrested, with his brother *Legal-Life*, by Captain *Self-Denial* and Lord *Willbewill*, who ‘put them in Hold till they died.’

We not only live by faith in the Word, but by obedience to it. At one point in the campaign, when Mansoul had set the meaning of the Cross aside and become familiar with the Diabolonians again, the Townsmen came to the Lord *Secretary* for help: but He, being ‘ill at ease’, had nothing to say to them but this: ‘*You must look to the Law of the Prince*, and there see what is laid upon you to do.’ We shall get no response from Heaven unless we abide in the meaning of the Cross. Joshua may rend his clothes, fall upon his face and pour out his complaint to the Lord, but the Lord will only say: “Get thee up . . . Israel hath sinned . . .

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Up, sanctify the people" (Joshua vii. 10, 11, 13). The Lord will not come down to us in our disobedience; He insists that we arise and do His will.

'IT WAS I!'

"We are his workmanship" (Eph. ii, 10).

We have had occasion in earlier studies to remark upon the wonderful sovereignty of the Lord which lies behind the whole course of the conflict. As we contemplate the struggle in its details and parts, the issue would sometimes seem to be in doubt, but when we look off to the throne in Heaven the issue is gloriously certain. Listen to Emmanuel speaking to Mansoul at the end of the story:

'Thou seest, my Mansoul, how I have passed by thy Backslidings, and have healed thee . . . because I loved thee still. The way of backsliding was thine, *but the way and means of thy recovery was mine. I invented the means of thy return; it was I* that made an Hedge and a Wall, when thou wast beginning to turn to things in which I delighted not. 'Twas I that made thy sweet bitter, thy day night, thy smooth way thorny, and that also confounded all that sought thy destruction. *It was I* that set Mr. *Godly-Fear* to work in Mansoul. 'Twas I that stirred up thy *Conscience* and *Understanding*, thy *Will* and thy *Affections*, after thy great and woful Decay. 'Twas I that put life into thee, O Mansoul, to seek me, that thou mightest find me, and in thy finding find thine own Health, Happiness, and Salvation. 'Twas I . . .'

How wonderful are the Lord's ways with our lives! When we see Him we shall have many surprises, for then all our questions will be answered. He will say to us, perhaps: 'You remember that dark, puzzling experience, through which you passed in such anguish: well, it was I; I was behind that, doing a work in you and for you, which could be done in no other way. You know now that it was I; it was no cruel misfortune, it was I. You see, I love you.' Yes, we shall be amazed in that day, to discover just how wonderfully we have been *in His hands*. But shall we not *here and now* rejoice and rest in the fact that we are His workmanship, and that He is working *all things*—not just some things, but *all things*—together for good in our lives?

'O MY MANSOUL!'

There is a great heart behind this universe. The Lord loves Mansoul. 'He built it for his own de-

light . . . He built it and beautified it for himself.' No words can express what is in His heart toward us, His children, His people, but we know what is written:

"For the Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my resting-place for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it" (Ps. cxxxii, 13, 14).

"Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it . . . that he might present the church to himself a glorious church . . ." (Eph. v. 25, 27).

The Lord is concerned not merely to oust the enemy, but to *win* Mansoul. The Lord wants to win our hearts, to find a full and intelligent love in us. This is the supreme issue of the war. The Lord wants *us* wholly for Himself. How far has the Lord captured our hearts? The Lord is calling us on into ever deeper fellowship with Himself. He will not be content until from full hearts we cry—

'Come and dwell in the midst of us, and let us be thy people . . . accept of our Palace for thy place of residence . . . conquer us with thy Love, and overcome us with thy Grace.'

The Prize for which Heaven and Hell contend is MAN. In the Lord Jesus, God has revealed His thought and will for humanity, for man-kind—for us. What a conception! What a destiny, to be conformed to such a Man, a glorified Man! God is at war to secure a race of people like His Son—a glorious, harmonious, ordered race. His own satisfaction and vindication in the eternal ages, and His Son's inheritance, are bound up with *this* race, this new creation, this "glorious church": that is, with us! What a destiny! Mansoul is destined to be God's Masterpiece, 'the Top-piece', 'a Spectacle of wonder, a Monument of mercy, and the Admirer of its own mercy.' May the Lord enlighten us.

'You, *my Mansoul*, and the beloved of my heart . . . have I singled out from others, and have chosen you to myself . . . I have also redeemed you . . . I have bought thee for myself . . . bear in mind my love . . . Nothing can hurt thee but Sin; nothing can grieve me but Sin; nothing can make thee base before thy foes but Sin: take heed of Sin, my Mansoul . . . Show me, then, thy Love, my Mansoul . . . Love me against temptation, and I will love thee notwithstanding thine infirmities . . . Remember, therefore, *O my Mansoul*, that thou art beloved of me . . . Hold fast till I come.'

T. L. M.

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