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A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY



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TO OUR READERS

Dear Friends,

With this issue this little ship enters the fortieth year of its voyage. And what a forty years it has been! If storms from every quarter could have caused this barque to founder, it ought to have done so long ago. War, with all its features, raging right on to the very premises where it is printed: paper and all other commodities in short supply: sickness, and losses of fellow-workers: and almost bewildering opposition from spiritual and human forces, and much more, could so easily have resulted in cessation of production. But through all—a tremendous 'all'—not one issue has failed to go forth, and that to many countries. Survival alone would have been a miracle, but to be able to speak of growth, increase, and expansion, *right up to date*, does—to those who know best—speak of the wonderful power and grace of God. The full story will never be known this side of Heaven, but what *is* known is something which rightly provokes this testimony to His praise. We wonder whether—in the light of all that we know—even Paul had a monopoly of Divine support when he said: "Having received the help which cometh from God, we continue unto this day". If the Lord has needed any help from us, we feel that all that we have ever given has been a deep sense of dependence upon Him. For the rest, it is all of His grace.

And yet, we do recognize the faithful and sympathetic fellowship that we have had, and still do have, from the family of appreciative readers. If we can speak of the Lord's help, we can truly say that no *small* degree of it has come through His faithful fellow-workers over so wide a range. If you look through the 'Acknowledgment' columns for a single year you will realise that this is not an exaggerated testimony.

We are not out of the storms yet. The cost and conflict do not lessen, and fresh winds of adversity

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are constantly blowing, But we realise that, if our sails of faith are rightly set, even adverse winds can be made to carry us forward.

But what is it all about? What is *the* function of this little and unpretentious paper? There are numerous magazines and journals in Christianity. Most of them have their own purpose: some for specialized teaching or doctrine; some for prophetic interpretation; some—very many—for missionary enterprise, propaganda and information; some are of a more general character, and so on.

But what is the function of this one if it is not just one more to the so many? So often in these pages one phrase from the Apostle Paul has been employed to indicate the particular purpose and special nature of this instrument—it is—“Having this ministry”—“This ministry”. And, not detached from the context, but explained by it, we testify—“God . . . hath shined into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

It is the revelation of the significance of Jesus Christ in God’s universe. The context speaks of “God, who said, let light be”. Just as the Sun is the centre of the solar system and the source of all its light, life, and energy, so Christ is the Divine Centre of the spiritual universe, governing all things and giving light, life, power, and purpose to all in that sphere.

Yes, it is the absolute ascendancy and victory of Christ, and His filling of all things which is “This ministry”. The implications of this, and its ministration in the power of the Holy Spirit constitute a universal challenge and provoke every kind and quarter of antagonism. It is to “the testimony of Jesus” that God is committed, and, although the opposition may be very great, the vindication is with the Lord.

As we move on into another year of “This ministry” we count on your prayers and loyal standing with us in the battle.

The Lord make it the greatest year ever for you and for us, and, oh, that it might see ‘His appearing’!

Yours in His grace,

T. AUSTIN-SPARKS.

HORIZONED BY CHRIST

CHAPTER THREE

THE next peak on this skyline which is the Divine Horizon is Pentecost. What a link in the mountain-chain setting for the significance of Christ “Pentecost” is! It is necessary to hold strongly in mind the fact that Pentecost stands very closely related to the whole Horizon, and is not something in itself. We must see that

PENTECOST IS THE ABSOLUTE COROLLARY OF THE RESURRECTION AND EXALTATION OF CHRIST

Facts though these may have been, and wonderful truths, yet, apart from Pentecost, they would be objective and in Heaven. Pentecost means that all the meaning of those realities is brought down here to be experienced in individual believers and the Church. What Christ risen and glorified meant became the dynamic of the Church by Pentecost. The advent of the Holy Spirit made all that concerning Him the immediate Horizon of the Church.

I. IT WAS THE DYNAMIC OF CHRIST’S RELEASE

It is not difficult to see how the horizon of the Church expanded with and from Pentecost. Dynamic is the right word. Dynamite might even be better, for it was by sheer force that the limitations collapsed. All the narrower horizons of nationality, racialism, geography, and religious exclusiveness began to fall, or had their continuance doomed by Pentecost.

Christ is greater than all these, and the Holy Spirit will not countenance or tolerate anything that makes Him smaller than He is. Give the Holy Spirit a chance and see what He will do with limitations placed upon Christ. Resist Him, and He will move on and leave you to your littleness.

If we resort to expedients to make the Church missionary, or to stimulate missionary interest or

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zeal, we begin at the wrong end. Time and energy will be unnecessarily wasted. Let Christ, crucified, risen, and exalted come in the power of the Holy Spirit and the result will be that everything will expand to the dimensions of Christ.

Before Pentecost it was the local—Jerusalem.

After Pentecost it was universal—"the uttermost parts".

It is a reversing of Pentecost when the course changes from the universal to the local unless it is to bring the local into the universal.

II. IT WAS THE DYNAMIC OF CHRIST'S HOLINESS

Symbols of the Holy Spirit are fire, wind, water. All these speak of cleansing. Fire was especially characteristic of Pentecost. So much has been made of the zeal, power, and wonder of Pentecost that it has been overlooked that fiery judgment of sin was very present. The Holy Spirit through Peter brought home to men's consciences guilt and responsibility for the death of Christ.

The death of Christ was in no sense a merely local matter. It related to universal sin. It was "the sin of the world" that "the Lamb of God" bore away. In Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, the world was represented, just as Jew and Gentile were officially represented at Calvary. Responsibility for Christ was laid at the doors of the whole world on that day. Jesus had said that when the Holy Spirit came He would convict the world of sin and judgment because of its attitude toward Himself. So, all men were, and are, charged with sin and judgment until they 'repent' and thus confess. This is exactly what happened under the power of the Spirit at Pentecost. The Holy Spirit brought Christ as universal holiness, the bearer of, and cleanser from, sin to be the only horizon of salvation. The prophet Malachi had prophesied that "the Messenger of the Covenant" would "sit as a refiner . . . and purify the sons of Levi" (iii. 1-3). There is no salvation without the sense of sin.

In the 'Revelation' the sins of the churches are judged by Him "whose eyes are as a flame of fire", and this is related to "the seven spirits of God", i.e., the Holy Spirit in spiritual fulness and perfection.

The least spiritual church of Paul's letters was Corinth; it was the most carnal, and the emphasis is on holiness, and judgment upon its absence.

Holiness is separation unto God. It is that which is suitable for fellowship with God. Christ in His holiness is the Horizon of union with God, and this is effected by the *Holy Spirit*.

III. PENTECOST IS THE DYNAMIC OF FULNESS

"They were all filled". But remember, this was a testimony to Christ, for the Holy Spirit ever and always works in relation to Christ. It is Christ—God's Son—who is to "fill all things". To be filled with—or by—the Spirit is to be filled with Christ. Do not make the Holy Spirit or 'Pentecost' the beginning and the end. Do not make the Holy Spirit a fenced-round and separate Object. His work is to fill all things with Christ.

To this end the ascended Lord by the Holy Spirit, gave gifts among men. "He gave some apostles" whose chief function was related to the expansiveness and universal dimensions of Christ. He gave ". . . some, pastors and teachers", whose function related to the intensiveness of Christ; His increase *in believers*.

The universal features of Pentecost are not difficult to see; indeed, they are difficult to miss. Read the account again with this thought in mind and the whole event will be seen to be dominated by it. Pentecost makes Christ the Horizon of salvation, sanctification, expansion, and consummation.

For the present, all that is left to point out is

THE HORIZON OF HIS COMING AGAIN

This is not a treatise on the 'Second Coming', but just an emphasis upon this inclusive meaning.

The 'Coming Again' of the Lord Jesus is the consummation of the cycle of His whole mission. There is a very real sense in which Christ's return horizons everything related to Him.

That is surely shown in the fact (which may surprise some people) that the 'coming again' of Christ is referred to in the Scriptures more times than any other matter. In type, figure, symbol, analogue, parable, song, metaphor, prophecy, narrative, doctrine, exhortation, warning, and appeal, this matter takes pre-eminence.

From the first intimation in Eden of the final bruising of Satan, to the full and ultimate accomplishment in the 'Revelation', His coming a second time is implicit in all the Scriptures. This, of course, is true of His first coming and His Cross, but they are gathered into the 'coming again' to find their justification and vindication there. Every fundamental doctrine is bound up with the 'coming again': redemption, sanctification, conduct and walk, suffering, glory. In the 'coming again', redemption will be completed and the Cross vindicated.

At His coming all the doctrine concerning the

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Church will find its completion and realization. The Elect Body will be exalted to function in joint-rulership with Christ over the world. The present world-rule of Satan will be overthrown and replaced by this Church chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world for this "eternal purpose". The earth will be delivered from the bondage of corruption; the bodies of believers will be released from the law of corruption.

This 'Blessed Hope' is the Horizon of the suffering and the storm-beaten Church. It has been so from the beginning.

The Horizon of believers is not what is happening, or is going to happen on the earth, but His coming, which is as certain as the dawn! ..

'Surely He cometh, and the earth rejoices,
Glad in His coming who hath sworn, I come.

Yea thro' life, death, thro' sorrow and thro'
sinning,
He shall suffice me, for He hath sufficed:
Christ is the end, for Christ was the beginning,
Christ the beginning, for the end is Christ.'

(F. W. H. M.)

THE RISEN CHRIST AND HIS CROSS

"O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken, behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into His glory" (Luke xxiv. 25, 26).

LITTLE wonder that the hearts of these men burned within them as Jesus walked with them by the way, and unfolded to their astonished minds the teaching of their own Scriptures about the Cross. We can imagine that it was a burning shame that possessed them when their eyes were opened to the truth. On that we do not dwell, but we must needs emphasize the point at least, that Christ Himself here preached the Cross. We are told that if we want the preaching of the Cross we must go to Paul, and not to Christ. It does not look so here. In His very first conversation after rising from the dead, it is the Cross He preaches and expounds.

They had fled from the Cross in stupefaction and horror. They mourned over the Cross as the final seal of ruin upon all their hopes and aspirations. And now the very first thing our Lord does is to bring them back to the Cross, and compels them, to their shame and surprise, to find it in their own Scriptures plainly revealed by Moses and all the prophets. How one longs to have heard that discourse! With what joyful surrender we would yield to the proofs adduced *in cumulo* by our Lord, as He traced the story of the Cross in the Old Testament.

With what startling clearness we should then have seen the necessity for that Cross. The physical necessity, the moral necessity, the spiritual necessity, the eternal necessity. Where are the men, or seraphim, on earth, or in Heaven, who can tell us what that necessity involves? Go to Peter, to John,

to Paul, listen to them, ponder, pray, follow them up the Alpine heights of their doctrine of the Cross, and what do you find? Men full of the Holy Ghost, enlarged in utterance by the Holy Ghost, dwelling in the Divine illumination of the Holy Ghost, and yet panting and wrestling with the sad limitations of human speech, thought and experience, as they try to unfold the stupendous mystery of the Cross, able only to fling themselves at last into the arms of the Almighty, with the cry, "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever. Amen"

And yet there seems to be a sense in which Christ is unfolding the necessity for His Cross down through the generations. From that Cross He never lets the true Church separate. It is the place of death and the place of life. The place of agony, the place of song. The place of penitence, the place of peace. It interprets all human need and sorrow, and mystery. It opens the way into the highest reaches of human bliss and human destiny. The true Gospel ministry is begotten of the Cross. The true Church of God in the earth is the Church of the Crucified. The true life of God in the soul is the life flowing from the Cross. We know the Cross, and yet it remains to be known. We see it, and yet it is hidden in the glory of its own majesty. We measure it, and it abides unmeasurable. We cling to it, and as we cling it carries us up into diviner heights of purity and victory. It is a *growing* Cross. It is old, and yet

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getting newer. It was Pascal who once said, 'Jesus will be in agony till the end of the world. No sleep for Him during this time.'

This may be a mere conceit, but if the Church of Christ be His body, and be the Church of the Crucified, there seems to be ground for Pascal's words, and for the thought that the travail of the Cross is not ended. What if Paul's words require a larger meaning than we have yet given them?—"Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ, in my flesh, for his body's sake which is the Church." Where is the man who has yet explained those words? When the last generation has been gathered into the Kingdom, and all the redeemed generations meet in the glory at the feet of the Lamb, only then will be seen what the filling up of the afflictions of Christ in the lives of His blood-bought saints meant, for themselves, and for the world, and for eternity. People speak of an old-fashioned Gospel. But that is an impossibility. The Cross is growing in intensity of interest, newness and Divine significance every generation. God's saints know that. You cannot persuade them to the contrary. Sainthood is not a sainthood apart from the Cross.

Take our individual lives as the index of this. Which of us, even though we have known the power of the Cross for a lifetime, will venture to say that its work is at an end in us? Has Christ crucified come to us at last, to say as some earthly physicians have to do sometimes, 'I can do no more for you. My Cross has exhausted its resources upon you. You need and can get no more at My hands.' We shrink from the very thought. We feel wounded by the very putting of the question. 'God forbid!' we cry, 'Alas! Alas! the Cross has still too much to do with us and in us. We ought to have been holier, sweeter, nobler men and women than we are if we had yielded to the Cross all the time and all the way.' Ah, then, in so far as we are concerned the Cross cannot be antiquated, nor out of date, nor superseded.

We still need it. It still claims us. Sin is still with us, so are lovelessness, the body of death, the limitation of earth, the tears of both sorrow and shame, and for all these there is no hope, save in the Cross.

And then, what about the unsaved world? Who can look out on that poor, restless, dissatisfied, hungry, struggling, Godless, helpless, hopeless, sinning, suffering world to-day without a sense of anguish—if not at most, despair? Oh let us look at it closely, sympathetically, and with readiness to diagnose its need. Let us listen to the deep

undertones of pain, misery, madness, that run through all the so-called pleasure, and song and defiance of its myriad millions, and how can we with the agony of this vision in our souls, venture to think for a moment that the Cross is antiquated, or needless, or effete?

We who know the power of the Cross in our own lives dare not think so. The man in the pulpit who would preach anything less than the Cross of Christ as a remedy for the world's sin and misery—we cannot but brand as a traitor to God, an enemy to men. Instead of being less preached, less valued, less commended, we feel that it must be preached with infinitely greater power; valued as God Himself estimated it, and commended as only those can commend it who are now safely housed in glory, and have realized that it is indeed "the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes".

The Cross of Christ is the newest and most modern of all forces. Of modern forces we have many brilliant, valuable, and blessed results. There is no need to underestimate or despise any of them. No wise man will do so. But put them all together, and they cannot deliver one soul from death, nor cool the burning fever of sin in the human heart. No, no, to those who get behind the scenes there comes often the discovery that modern progress in many cases only adds to the sum of human misery, and sets men to answer questions, and solve problems that are simply intolerable, and crushing if they are not answered and solved at the foot of the Cross. Thank God, they are and can be answered there. We have seen it and know it, have we not?

In the hour of their sin, shame, penitence and grief, souls have gone with us to the Cross, and come away pardoned, pacified, delivered, saved. And many of them are with us to-day still, to testify that they are not ashamed of the Cross. In it they have found their Heaven here. All the purest impulses of their souls find there daily renewal. The fervour of their prayers for the world is based on the solid experience of the saving virtue of the Cross in their own lives.

The grace that has made them more than conquerors, can do the same for others, and so intercession becomes one of the sweetest privileges of the Christian life. For them always, the Cross is in the midst. Nothing can dim its lustre. Nothing can shake its foundations. Nothing can touch its power. Nothing can change its purpose. It is the key to Heaven. It is the glory of God. It is the wonder of angels. It is the song of the redeemed.

It is light amid earth's shadows, the staff in the

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valley of the shadow of death, and the passport into the eternal felicity of the Father's house, and thus we join—gladly—in the poet's song:—

'O Cross, that liftest up my head

I dare not ask to fly from thee ;
I lay in dust life's glory dead.
And from the ground there blossoms red,
Life that shall endless be.' Amen.

W. D. M.

"SOME BETTER THING"

"And these all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect." (Hebrews xi. 39, 40).

THE simple explanation of this passage is that we who still live by faith are ultimately to benefit from the deprivations suffered by earlier saints. It is really for us who come after that God has reserved "some better thing". But it is fair to say that God's character will ensure that those who had to be denied the immediate benefit of the promises will finally have a share in the better thing. More than that, it is clear from the Scriptures that whenever God said No to His praying people, His kindness made sure that in the end they enjoyed a greater blessing than what had been requested and denied. Here are some of the witnesses to the fact that God always has in mind "some better thing".

ABRAHAM

It seems natural enough to begin with Abraham. God so often honoured his faith and answered his prayers, that it is with rather a shock that we read of the time when God said a very definite No to him. The prayer was, "Oh that Ishmael might live before thee!" (Genesis xvii. 18), and the answer was a rather brusque "Nay!" Abraham was not asking that Ishmael might stay alive, for there was no fear that he would die. What he did want God to do was to recognize Ishmael as the true inheriting son; to accept him as the makeshift substitute for a true-born son of Sarah.

God's refusal had nothing to do with morals, as such. He accepted four of Jacob's sons who were born in the same way, and made no difference among the twelve even when writing their names on New Jerusalem's gates. Ishmael, however, was in a different position, for he represented a sincere but misguided attempt to help God out of a dilemma. A son had been promised to Sarah, but it finally seemed to them that it was beyond the power even of God Himself to implement that

promise. What more natural, then, in the modes of those days, than that Abraham should produce a son in the way he did? Abraham tried to persuade God that this was so, only to meet with an uncompromising refusal.

This was not a lightly uttered prayer of Abraham. He was actually on his face before God when he voiced it, and since he had a strong affection for Ishmael, it must have been something that he really wanted. At that time this was the only child he had and the object of his love, and he felt that it could help the plans of God if Ishmael were accepted. Why was God so insistent? Why could He not be persuaded to make the best of the situation by accepting Abraham's solution? Though at one time God had seemed ready to give him a son by Sarah, the proposition now seemed so absurd that he could only laugh at it. Then he ventured to raise once again this idea of his, only to hear God answer such a decided No!

Nor was God's answer lightly uttered. Abraham was His friend. He had nothing against Ishmael, indeed gave assurances that he would be blessed and multiplied. But there are some things which even God cannot do. He cannot go back on His promises. He cannot accept a human substitute for His Divine plans. And He cannot give the easy answers to prayer which would ultimately involve loss and not gain. Think of Ishmael being incorporated into God's covenant people! For ever afterwards the new race would have been a sad testimony to what man has to do when God is unable to act. Instead of the national testimony to God's power there would have been a perpetual question, 'Can God?', or worse, a perpetual reproach, 'God is not able'.

What would have happened, also, when the Lord asked Abraham to offer up his son on Moriah? Ishmael was "a wild ass among men" with "his hand against every man" (Genesis xvi. 12). Instead of the harmonious consecration to the will of God when Isaac allowed himself to be bound and placed on the altar, there would have been a disgraceful scuffle on the holy mountain, with a son far more likely to turn the knife against his old father than meekly to submit, as Isaac did. No!

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Abraham did not know what he was asking when he pleaded for Ishmael. Nor do we, when we try to cajole or force God to accept our ideas and efforts as though they were His own. His love makes it necessary for the Lord to say No. From that negative there can be no appeal.

Yet God is not negative in His intentions. His "Nay" was followed at once by a reiteration that the true son would come through Sarah. We are not told that Abraham replied to this further promise, but we know that he at once obeyed God's commandment with regard to circumcision. In this case his actions were more important than words, for they showed that he accepted the Divine veto on the natural man, and that he was therefore ready for God's "better thing". It could only come when Abraham was reduced to genuine faith, and when his prayers were no longer tainted with self efforts and human ideas. In the end it was of Isaac that God spoke when he talked to Abraham of his only son whom he loved (Genesis xxii. 2). This was indeed God's "better thing".

MOSES

The next great refusal which we shall consider is described in the actual words of Moses: "And I besought the Lord at that time, saying . . . Let me go over, I pray thee, and see the good land . . . But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and hearkened not unto me; and the Lord said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more of this matter . . . for thou shalt not go over this Jordan" (Deuteronomy iii. 23 - 28).

It is clear that the prayer of Moses was refused because an example had to be made of him. Lesser men may have their faults passed over, but one who has such prominence must expect to be treated very strictly. Moses, like Abraham, was God's friend, and we may be sure that God felt no pleasure in denying him this simple request. Yet He did deny it, and even forbade Moses to mention the subject again. It is to the everlasting credit of that great man of God that he disregarded his own disappointment and without a tinge of jealousy set himself to help and encourage his successor.

Now it is not difficult to see why God had to make this decision. For practical reasons the people entering the land needed a younger, military man to lead them. In all their wilderness wanderings they had needed a shepherd, and had found one in the person of Moses. He had borne with them and tended them as a flock. Now they were an army. Before them lay a land to be conquered and for this they needed a captain. So it was better for the

people that Moses should give place to Joshua. And of course it was right dispensationally, for it is when the reign of the law (typified by Moses) has ceased that the reign of the Spirit (typified by Joshua) leads into the inheritance.

We, however, are not considering the people, but Moses himself. How can we say that he received a better thing by having his prayer refused? Well, let us imagine that he had not died as he did. In the land he would have grown old and feeble; perhaps like Eli, his eyesight might have failed, or worse, like David, he might have become a pitiful old invalid. Instead of the actual image which all Israelites had of the vigorous leader he might have come to be known as a poor, worn-out old figure, shuffling pathetically out of history. Instead of that "his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated . . ." (Deut. xxxiv. 7). His honour and dignity never deserted him; he was taken away in his full strength and the mourning over him was no mere formality but a genuine sense of loss. The people felt that they could only go on if Joshua was, in effect, another Moses (Joshua i. 17). So at least Moses proved that the Lord's timing was right. It always is! It was really weakness in Moses which made him try to persuade God to postpone the handover to his successor.

There is, however, more to it than that. In the Old Testament a great deal of importance is attached to a man's burial. "They buried him among the kings"; "they buried him not in the sepulchres of the kings"; "he shall be buried with the burial of an ass". All these, and many other references, show that the manner of a man's burial was most important, and this because his burial 'placed' him for posterity, it expressed the lasting worth—or lack of it—of his life. Now if this is true, then Moses occupies a unique place of honour among all the servants of God. In his case God Himself not only graced the burial with His presence, but actually performed it. No man was there; no man knows where his tomb is; the secret was between Moses and God alone (Deut. xxxiv. 6).

There is a strange reference to this burial in Jude 9. Whatever it means, the fact is clear that the highest beings in the spirit-world were involved in the laying to rest of the body of Moses. The archangels of light and darkness contended over this matter. There can be no doubt, then, that in his death Moses received the highest possible honours from Heaven itself. It almost seems as though God was determined to make up to Moses the loss he had endured. God had had to refuse his request to live on, but in doing so he heaped upon him honours unknown to mortal man. Sometimes the

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Lord has to deny us what we ask, and sometimes He has to do this for the sake of the example to others. But we may be sure that if He does this, He will make it up to us. For us, too, there is always "some better thing".

And what shall we say of Moses's share in the glory of the Mount of Transfiguration? And again, what of the honour implied in the heavenly "song of Moses the servant of God, and of the Lamb" (Rev. xv. 3)? Only that the immediate and earthly deprivation did not rob Moses of his heavenly reward. Indeed it almost seems that his eternal gain was all the greater.

DAVID

There were good reasons why God should not answer David's prayer that the son of his sinfulness should be spared from dying (II Sam. xii. 15 - 25), but David felt that they could perhaps be set aside in view of God's gracious pardon and restoration. So when the child was very sick, he prayed and fasted for seven whole days. He lay on his face, prostrate before God, and none of his servants could persuade him to take rest or food. For a long time he has been callous about his sin, but then the prophet Nathan had succeeded in waking up his slumbering conscience, and making him aghast at the enormity of his wicked behaviour. Pierced to the quick, he had turned to God to make a full confession, and had been assured of complete forgiveness. With this experience of the amazing greatness of God's grace, he had felt encouragement to set everything aside in order to plead with God for the life of the innocent child. So great had been his distress that when the child died, his servants were afraid to tell him, for they could not imagine what fresh paroxysm of grief would meet this denial of his prayer. To their astonishment no such thing happened. Once he knew that his prayer was rejected, "David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel; and he came into the House of the Lord and worshipped . . ." (v.20).

Here we have a further case of God's seeming rejection of His servant's prayer. And we have also the proof of the essential spirituality of David in the manner in which he accepted the denial. There is a David whom we dislike and despise—the David which we all are by nature. But there is also a David who is a man after God's heart—the David which by the Spirit we should all be. It was this spiritual man who behaved as though the Lord had said 'Yes' rather than 'No'; who found joy and peace in accepting the will of God.

But the story does not end there. For David, too, proved that there was a denial which was better than an answer, a following up of his disappointment by "some better thing". The account can be read in verses 24 and 25, the "better thing" being a child whom the world called Solomon, but for whom the Lord had a specially endearing name of love. The story makes it clear that this birth was the immediate and Divine outcome of their sorrow and of David's prayers. If David had been told, as he lay prostrate in agonized prayer, that all this would be the outcome, he could not have been more cheerful and trusting as he got up to worship and to eat. He was not told, but how right his behaviour was! *Even if*, as in David's case, there is human sin which has complicated things for God, and *even if* His answer has to be a denial, when sin is put away God is able to produce "some better thing". How great the Lord is!

ELIJAH

" . . . and he came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said. It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life . . ." (I Kings xix. 4). With all due respect for the great emotional strain under which the prophet Elijah laboured, it is surely not too harsh to say that this was a silly prayer. This man had prayed for the heavens to close and to open; he had prayed for life to come back to the dead; he had prayed for the people's hearts to be turned back to God; and he had prayed for the fire to fall. These were noble prayers, worthy of a great servant of the Most High. Now, however, he was praying for himself. What a poor, defeatist sort of prayer it was! "He requested *for himself* . . ." What mean and unworthy utterances come from us when self-pity and self-concern spoil our prayers. We are grateful that this is among the unanswered prayers. Elijah must have been most grateful. The Lord did not even say No to this one; He simply ignored it. Most of us are very grateful at times that God ignores some foolish prayer of ours.

Yet it would be wrong to imagine that Elijah did not mean every word he said. Only those who have risen to such heights of devotion as he had, and then sunk to such depths of seeming failure as he endured, can fully understand how sincere he was when he asked the Lord to take him away out of it all. "It is enough . . ." It was more than flesh and blood could bear. Surely it would be kind of the Lord to excuse him further heartbreak and let him fade quietly out.

But no! The Lord's servant has to go right

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through to the end ; he is not permitted to give up half way, nor even in sight of the goal. So Elijah is not granted his request. He must go on a little longer. He must call, train and hand over to his successor. There is no easy way out—God cannot say Yes to a demand that there should be. So once again we have the spectacle of what might seem a harsh denial on God's part, which in the end led to much better things than he had ever asked or thought.

At once he was given a gracious expression of God's love, for an angel watched over and fed him with tender solicitude, bringing no words of blame but only sympathetic comfort. How much better was this than the solitary death for which he had asked! Then he went on to Horeb, to hear 'the voice of gentle stillness'. And in the end he did not die at all, but made a triumphal ascent to glory in a whirlwind, accompanied by heavenly out-riders in chariots of fire. No! the Lord was not going to grant Elijah's request to slip quietly out of things ; He had something much better than that for His faithful servant. It is also to be noted that this man, like Moses, was given an honoured place on the Transfiguration Mount. So if we want to give up ; if we feel that the kindest thing is for God to let us do so, by all means let us pray Elijah's prayer if it will give us any satisfaction to do so, but we need not expect God to agree. He will not answer that prayer. He has "some better thing".

PAUL

We need not be surprised to find that such experiences did not terminate with the Old Testament. The New Testament carries on the same story. Take the case of Paul. He had many experiences of delay and seeming denial, but perhaps the most outstanding was that which determined the whole course of his service in the Gospel. Only after many years did the apostle disclose this secret agony of unanswered prayer in the temple at Jerusalem (Acts xxii. 17 - 21).

It is easy to discern what he was asking of the Lord. It was that he might be allowed to witness for Christ to his own nation. It seemed to be so logical as well as being a strong personal desire. He who had shared in the disputations and persecution ; he who had taken such an active part in the murder of Stephen ; who better than he could go to the misguided leaders in Jerusalem and tell them how wrong they had all been? God did not waste time in arguments as we do. He gave a peremptory command for the apostle to stop praying like this. There is ample evidence to show that this

always remained a deep personal disappointment to Paul. But there is also clear evidence that in spite of his various visits he never did preach to the nation in general, only to their leaders. Not once! He tried to do so, but when God says No, He means No. Much as Paul tried to get the denial countermanded, he did not succeed.

Yet any disappointment at the time must later have been dispelled by the much better and bigger commission which he received. The same voice which had told him to depart from Jerusalem also promised to send him to distant lands and nations. Every non-Jewish believer throughout the centuries, yes, and many Jewish believers too, have good reason to share with Paul in the verdict that God's "better thing" was a very big thing indeed.

JOHN

"And there come near unto him, James and John . . . saying unto him, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we ask of thee" (Mark x. 35). This sounds spiritual enough, "Whatsoever we ask . . ." why, surely that is a quotation from Scripture! Yet it was a prayer which was never answered. When the Lord enquired further of the two men, He found that they wanted personal pre-eminence—a place on His right hand and on His left hand in the glory.

Christ asked them if they were willing to pay the price. This is a most important question. It is no use our praying if we shrink from the cost of answered prayer. To their credit they were ready to pay this price, and in fact they both did drink of the cup of suffering for their Lord. Even so, the prayer was not and will not be answered. John himself is the best witness of this.

It so happens that he is the only man so far who has seen that glory. He was given a marvellous vision of the glory that is to be (Revelation v). He looked on the right hand, and what did he see? No place for James. No place for their rival, Peter. No place for John himself. There was no place for any other, either at the right hand or at the left, for the Lamb was the central figure in that great scene, alone in His great majesty with no place found for any other. Far from being disappointed, John gives us the impression that he thoroughly agreed with those Living Ones, and the Elders and the "ten thousand times ten thousand", in their exultant praises of the Lamb. Doubtless he wished that his foolish prayer for pre-eminence might be blotted out of the Divine record. How stupid and selfish will some of our most pious requests appear, when they are seen in the light of eternity!

WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

Yes, John too had a "better thing". He saw the nique and unshared glory of his beloved Lord. However, before his visions were finished he did see one at the right hand of the Lord Jesus in glory, or he saw the Bride, the Lamb's Wife, sharing the throne and the kingdom with Him. To be one of that blessed company of the redeemed was to share in a privilege infinitely above the petty throne which John had longed for and been denied. And doubtless he was quite content. May God grant

that so we shall be also. For redeemed sinners to have a place among Christ's Bride will indeed be "some better thing". It will be the best thing that even God can give us. We shall not complain if some lesser requests are denied so long as the outcome is eternal love-union with our reigning Lord. This was probably what the Hebrew letter meant when it pointed on to that "better thing", which God has provided for us.

H. F.

PRAYER—FOCUSED AND FIGHTING

WHAT earnest worker for God is there who has not often and acutely realized the danger of being desultory and unconcentrated in prayer?

But what is meant by 'God will *focus* our prayer'? And what is the meaning of 'praying through'? And what is the connection between these two ideas?

Of Napoleon Bonaparte we have somewhere read that he was one morning watching intently the opening of the attack about to be delivered by his foes; and, speedily grasping the plan guiding the movements, he instinctively foresaw the issues that would develop during the fight; and, turning to one of his marshals, and pointing to a certain village, he exclaimed: 'That is your point; take your men, and hold that village all day.' His masterly, military mind, intuitively recognized that possession of that village would inevitably prove to be the determining factor of the battle, and by seizing and holding the spot he assured victory to himself.

Napoleon 'focused' his attention on that point of the field; in military language it was the key of the position. And it will be found by the competent soldier of Christ that in each of our battles there will be one or more focal points, crucial matters, the determining of which settles the issue of the conflict: and it is by concentrating upon these points that prayer ceases to be desultory and victory is secured.

But, first of all, have we each definitely realized that our Lord's work is also warfare? Are we governed by the conception that the builder, husbandman, herald, servant, must be also a soldier, or his work as the former will be sadly marred by our Lord's foes?

Is it with the reader a practical, vivid experience, as well as a doctrinal conception, that the whole work of God is carried on in the face of determined spirit-opposition? The forces in this conflict are, on the one side, the Holy Spirit of

God, unfallen angelic spirits, and the spirits of the sanctified, devoted human soldiers of Christ; and on the other side, Satan, his angelic and demon hosts, and the spirits of the fallen sons of Adam, in whom he is the ruling power.

The conditions of the 'spiritual atmosphere' can be easily perceived. Where the former spirit-forces predominate there will be a godly, holy atmosphere; where the latter, a satanic, soul-poisoning atmosphere . . .

But on an English racecourse, or in the midst of a heathen festival crowd, there is an atmosphere uncongenial to godliness, wherein spiritual life is a ceaseless, fierce struggle, and prayer is agony and toil. There the soul feels stifled, cannot breathe freely, is weakened at once, and may, if a change of air be not procured, be finally paralysed utterly. And what is meant by 'praying through' is that the spirit of man, enveloped by these opposing spirits, pierces its way through this phalanx of foes, and establishes and maintains communication with the Almighty Spirit of God and with heavenly allies; and does this so effectively and continuously that, for practical purposes, it lives in a heavenly atmosphere, and defies the noxious influences of its earthly surroundings . . .

Thus being near God, then let us 'wait on Him', as the marshals waited around Bonaparte each for his own instructions. Those men on the hilltop could overlook the whole district around; we, once we are near Christ in spirit-experience, can gain a heavenly, detached outlook over all earthly affairs. But more: we are not left to our own view and judgment, even though these are formed from our heavenly point of vantage. The marshals of the Emperor were all skilled generals, and personally competent to lead campaigns; but Napoleon's abilities were greater than theirs combined, and that was their supreme advantage over the enemy. How much, how exceeding much of wisdom for us is concentrated in these six short words, "We

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have the mind of Christ" (I Cor. ii. 16). He perceives with infallible judgment the 'keys' to the battle; and that whether it be the conflict viewed as lasting through the centuries, or whether it be the conflict raging to-day in my little corner of the wide battle-field. And if we are waiting by Him, and if He knows us to be trustworthy—as Napoleon's officers were at hand, and were, as he knew, reliable—then He will show to us the 'focal' points of the field, and will appoint us thereto; and in HOLDING THOSE POINTS VICTORY WILL SURELY BE GAINED.

I see that officer turn from Bonaparte glad at heart to be honoured with such a charge, so crucial to the whole of the momentous interests at stake. I hear our Lord's greatest soldier of this age, who led the van in the Gospel attack on the Pagan world, exultingly cry, 'I thank him that enabled me, even Christ Jesus our Lord, for that he counted me faithful, appointing me to his service' (I Tim. i. 12).

My brother, in your lonely, difficult station, beset by soul perils, dogged by dangers, do you feel like Paul? If not, think who commissioned you; think of the honour of holding the dangerous, central positions; think of the eternally momentous issues of the conflict—for the souls of men, for your own reward in the day of triumph, for the honour of your Lord: think on these things, and 'thank Him that enableth you'.

And I see that marshal ride away, put himself at the head of his men, press straight to the 'focal' point, make disposition of his forces, and then through the whole of the day, amidst heat and strain and peril, then—just *hold on*, till he learned of victory . . .

The spirit-beings called Angels are one of the means through which God exerts spirit-energy for the doing of His will on the spirit-plane (Dan. x. 10-13). And the prayer of faith we take to be another of the agencies through which He is pleased to put forth the authority of His court to enforce its ruling. True prayer in the spirit is an effort of the spirit of man (not of his intellect merely); and

as such it is a setting in motion of a force strictly proper to the spirit-realm and -conflict.

Hence, such praying is 'agony' to the spirit (Col. iv. 12), that is, it is to the spirit what the fierce contest in the arena was to the wrestler struggling for glory, or the gladiator fighting for life; and it may therefore create such strain as drains even the body of strength, of which the most awful example is set before us in the words, "and being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke xii. 44). The word 'agony' in this place is a noun cognate to the verb used in Col. iv. 12, and also in I Cor. ix. 25, 'striveth'; John xviii. 36; I Timothy vi. 12, 'fight', etc.

I therefore suppose the prayer of faith to be as PROPER AN OBSTACLE TO THE ADVANCE OF AN EVIL SPIRIT, as a brick wall is to the progress of a leaden bullet; and that it can as effectually stop the activities of a demon as can manacles HINDER THOSE OF A MAN; AND THUS, MAINLY, IT IS THAT WE CAN "FIRST BIND THE STRONG ONE", AND THEN SET FREE HIS CAPTIVES; AND THEREFORE IT IS THAT, SO FEW BELIEVERS BEING EQUAL TO THIS CONFLICT, SO FEW DELIVER SOULS FROM HIS THRALDOM (Mark iii. 27). *Christ*

And if any reader has no such battle to recall, nor anything really like it, with all my heart to you I say, Ask the Lord to equip you, and to lead you into such conflicts.

In every battle there are crucial spots. Get near and stay near to your Divine Chief until He turns and points them out—'God will *focus* our prayer, if we wait on Him'. And at those points face and *force* the fight. And though the conflict be keen, though defeat seem certain, though the battle should rage for hours, for days, for months, even for years, yet—*hold on*, HOLD ON; for to such a servant as will do so, it is written concerning all his foes, "And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith JEHOVAH, to deliver thee" (Jer. i. 19).

G. H. L.

HORIZONED BY PURPOSE

CHAPTER THREE

IT is not too strong a thing to say that, in human life, everything hangs on a sense of purpose. Lose that, and we lose all motive and incentive in living and working.

A distinguished psychologist and psychiatrist has said that about a third of his cases are suffering

from no specific neurosis, but from senselessness and emptiness of their lives. He says: 'Among my patients from many countries, all of them educated persons, there is a considerable number who come to me, not because they are suffering from a neurosis, but because they could find no meaning in

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

life.' Someone else has said: 'The outstanding feature of our time is confusion, a depressing consciousness of futility and helplessness, and secret despair.' This, and much more is all too true, and, for this reason, there is a primary demand to return to that realm where 'Purpose' is a dominant feature. It is not wrong to say that the revealed truth that the world is *not* going to be an easier and better place to live and work in as we approach the end of the age, constitutes the main battle for faith where God's people are concerned, and it would be a very easy thing to let hands hang down, and for the knees to become feeble.

Over against all this, then, it is to some point that we have been led to the consideration of the 'Horizon of Purpose'.

A third specific point has to follow on and fit into our previous chapter, but we must continually keep in view the full setting and context. What we have pointed out is that the idea of Purpose stands over the whole Bible revelation. This all-governing idea explains all God's activities and interests in creation and men. In the Scriptures it is clear that God's Son, now known as Jesus Christ, our Lord, is the inclusive and ultimate sphere of all that Divine Purpose: that His Coming into this world; His life, death, resurrection, and exaltation are all immediately and exclusively related to the realisation of the Purpose: that the Holy Spirit has come as the age-long custodian of God's Purpose concerning His Son.

Further, it is revealed that the Church is the eternally elect vessel and instrument in which, and through which that Purpose is to be—in the first place—realised, and then administered in larger realms in "the ages to come": that it is the Church, as the Body of Christ, which is "called according to his purpose", and "chosen in him before the foundation of the world": and that individuals can and will only come into the realisation of that Purpose in an organically related way in the Body corporate.

Again, this "on high calling" explains the particular and peculiar spiritual history—the discipline, suffering, and trial—of those who are so called. Any truly spiritual ministry unto this Purpose, and any representation of it in companies of committed people of God do experience and suffer every wile, stratagem, and malicious effort of the evil powers to break them up, wear them out, pull them down onto earthly ground, force them to compromise, and so on. They are the object of every kind of misrepresentation, treachery, cruelty, ostracism, and discrediting.

All the above is more than amply revealed in

Scripture. Israel was elect to illustrate and demonstrate all this in an *earthly and historical* way, and their history is just the history of Divine Purpose on two sides, one positive, when they were on the line of the Purpose; the other negative, when they got away from it, as they now are.

The Church is that in which the principles of the Eternal Purpose are taken up in a spiritual, heavenly and eternal way. All this has been implicit in what we have said earlier.

We have been in 'Ezekiel' because there in a way more definite and clear the two sides mentioned above are embodied and represented. There certainly is the temporal and historic side as to Israel, and the *spiritual* principles are clearly observable in the symbolisms, figures, signs, and mysteries. But there is much in 'Ezekiel' which is super-historical, extra-local, -temporal, -earthly; and which cannot be realised in an earthly nation without doing serious violence to the first advent of Christ, the meaning of His Cross, and present position and work. The Letter to the Hebrews, the Letter to the Galatians, and other vital and categorical statements as to the fulness and *finality* of Christ's work—the "once for ever" sacrifice and redemption—cannot be set aside because of a failure to discern and discriminate between what was only intended to be an earthly object lesson—which forfeited its calling and vocation—and that eternal, heavenly reality which, *in principle*, is implicit in God's methods in *every* age.

Now then, back to 'Ezekiel'. In this book we have—in the main—two things. In relation to Purpose—which is so evidently characteristic and dominating throughout—there is, firstly, the instrument and vessel, elect and dealt with on the sole basis of vocation. That vocation being universal (unto all nations) for a witness (what they were) and a testimony (what they declared). It was the failure in this by exclusiveness, making themselves the limit or 'horizon', and by pride, jealousy, bigotry, and fear, withholding from the nations the knowledge of God and His concern for their salvation; it was this self-centredness and self-sufficiency which lost them their place and purpose. By judgment, discipline, warning, entreaty, and the voice of all the prophets, God sought to recall them to their position with Him in order to make them a blessing among the nations. This they finally and fully refused when the greatest of all the prophets—and more than a prophet—appeared among them, "whom they slew, hanging him upon a tree".

What we said at the beginning of this chapter about the malady of frustration and meaningless-

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ness afflicting so many, has been literally true of the Jewish nation, ever since they were set aside, and the Church inherited what they forfeited—in a spiritual way. Let the Church take note of this solemn warning and avoid like a plague anything that would militate against its heavenly calling and vocation; and let it realise that it is ‘horizoned’ by Purpose, which “calling and election” must be made sure. Too many things have started out in the glorious emancipation and release of Christ in resurrection and have in course of time become something in themselves, jealous for themselves, fearful of being touched in *their* resources or ‘work’, or community; the result being that their original vitality and effectiveness has been largely lost. It is eventually some *thing*, whereas it was once the Lord.

Having seen the election of a corporate vessel, the other thing in ‘Ezekiel’ is the specific nature of its ministry. This we have seen as represented by two of the three designations of the Prophet, in this book, i.e., “son of man” and “a sign”.

We now proceed to consider the third.

“A WATCHMAN”

This is what Israel ought to have been to all the nations (illustrated, e.g., by Jonah and Nineveh). This is what the Church ought to be to the world. This is what every local church ought to be to its locality. But, in ‘Ezekiel’ where things are bad in the nation, the designation and its meaning apply to the people of God themselves; and in this connection we consider it here. It must now—while still being a call to the Church and churches as such—be a call for specific ministries within the Church. What we say then is, *in the first place*, to the servants of God.

“*Son of man, I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel*” (Ezekiel iii. 17; xxxiii. 1-9).

This is not an altogether new idea or title for the Lord’s servant. It occurs more than once in Isaiah in an objective and kind of abstract way. No one else but Ezekiel is mentioned as having been specifically appointed to this position.

It will be noted that this appointment took place very early in his ministry.

What then was the particular function of the Watchman, and what were his essential characteristics?

Firstly, and supremely, he was the custodian of the elect purpose of the people to whom he was appointed. The very existence of those people *as related to the Divine purpose* was very largely in his hands. In this respect, perhaps one of the most clamant and urgent needs of our time is of this

prophetic function. There are Evangelists, whose function is related to the unsaved, and *positively not* the oversight of a local church. For the Evangelist to get—or be put—into such a position will sooner or later mean that he frustrates the *full* purpose of God by keeping God’s people to a very limited and elementary measure of Christ. This is the tragedy of any evangelistic work which stops at itself. It is the tragedy of many so-called Gospel Missions and Mission Halls. They often serve to abort full purpose and spiritual maturity. Let the Evangelist—anointed of God—do his work, but let him—and all others—recognize that his work is only relative and not something in itself apart.

The world is now seeing the terrible spectacle of Christians and a ‘Church’ unable to meet and go through the awful fires of testing, and without the tremendous impact of an authoritative witness and message. In a day of spiritual declension or weakness, it is the Prophetic function that is needed.

THE WATCHMAN’S VOCATION IS AT NIGHT

Firstly then, the Watchman must have a deep sense of the essential purpose for which God’s people exist. He *must* know, with a heart-consuming ‘burden’ what one immense phrase means—“according to his purpose”. It is his mission to instil into God’s people this supremely important matter of “the on high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. iii. 14). The servant of the Lord is essentially one who has had his eyes opened, and that to the superlative *purpose* of salvation, grace, redemption.

This man must be one who can see in the dark.

He compasses the whole Horizon of Christ. He is alert to all that invades that Horizon to destroy or spoil the vocation of God’s people. He cannot force them to heed his warning or obey his entreaty. His it is to *see*, to proclaim, to be faithful, to know.

We have heard it said without due thought that a people are the expression and representation of the ministry they receive. This is only half the truth. They may not lay it to heart; they may “hear and not give heed”, “see and not perceive”. They may be in the presence of the best that the Lord can give, and be a very poor expression of it. The point here is that the Watchman must be exonerated by his faithfulness. This is the message of Ezekiel xxxiii. A people may disintegrate, lose out, and be a denial of all that God has said, but it must never be rightly laid to the charge of the Watchman.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

It is costly, lonely, and wearisome work, this vocation of the Watchman. A psalmist said. "My soul looketh for the Lord, more than watchmen look for the morning" (Psalm cxxx. 6). Often a watchman had to do a day's work and then be called to go on duty at night. How he longed for the first rays of dawn so that he could creep away for a little rest before the day's work began again. The Watchmen of God often long for the darkness to pass, but they must not sleep while it lasts. Within the meaning of this vocation there lies the necessity to discern and be able to interpret the portents, the processes, the implications of developments and events, especially as they affect the people of God.

His Horizon is Christ, and his supreme and in-

clusive business is to see the significance of Christ in God's eternal purpose.

The Watchman in the Prophets was a man depicted or described as a man with a 'burden'—"the burden of the word of the Lord".

So great are the issues of Purpose, so vital to life and work is the meaning of the Church's eternal vocation, that anyone who enters into it in reality will be one who has a deep sense of *heavy* responsibility. What he says is what he has *seen!* But it is unto the *seeing* that God would bring all His people, for only as *they* see can they fulfil their heavenly calling. The Church itself is meant to be a Body with eyes wide open. The quest of the great Church-Apostle must be the quest of the Church itself—"a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the [full] knowledge of him" (Ephesians i. 17).

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

AS IF IT HAD NEVER BEEN

"AND then the clock started going backwards", said Mother, "and I really wondered what would happen next." James was sitting at tea with his parents, and listening wide-eyed to his mother's excited story of what had taken place that morning. She had begun by telling Father how the 'Hoover' had started blowing out the dust, instead of sucking it up. Imagine her feelings as she was trying to clean the room, when she found that she was only dirtying it. Dust was being blown about everywhere.

"So the only thing to do", continued Mother, "was to switch it off and use the dustpan and brush." Father was just about to jump up from the table to have a look at this faulty machine, but Mother kept him back. "Wait a minute", she said, "I have not finished my story yet."

It seems that while she was working away on her hands and knees, her friend, Mrs. Neighbour, called, and when she was in the house she began to ask what was wrong with the electricity to-day. "There is nothing wrong with that", replied Mother, "but as a matter of fact my Hoover has gone wrong, and that is why I am working like this." As she spoke, she glanced up at the clock, and saw to her surprise that the time was twenty minutes earlier than when she had started. "I know", said Mrs. Neighbour, guessing her thoughts, "it is the same in my house. The clocks are going backwards."

Father was finding this hard to believe, but he said nothing as in any case it was now time for the news. When this came on, the whole business was

explained, for it seemed that the electric cables had been wrongly connected, so that there had been chaos not only in James's home but in the whole district.

After the meal was over, Father began to talk about this strange happening. He asked them, "Wouldn't it be good if time could go backwards, eh?" While James was trying to make up his mind about this, Mother broke in. "I should like it very much, but I know that James would not—especially with his birthday coming next week!"

James was still silent. True, he wanted his birthday to come as soon as possible, but there was something else on his mind. The previous Sunday he had been given sixpence for the Missionary Box, but instead of putting it in, he had kept it for himself and spent it the next day. He had been so unhappy about this that he had determined to make it up out of his pocket money, but even this resolve did not blot out the past with its dishonour and untruth. He said nothing, but in his heart he felt very much that he wished the clock would go back. But he knew that this could not be.

James's father could see clearly that the boy had a troubled mind, but he said nothing about it, not even when he went to his bedroom to say good-night. For a few minutes father and son chatted together, and then suddenly James burst out, "Father, has God ever put the clock back for anyone?"

Instead of answering direct, his father took up his Bible and read II Kings 20. 1-11. He read verse 10 over again, "And Hezekiah answered, It

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is a light thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees; nay, but let the shadow return backward ten degrees." "There you are, son", said Father, "the king knew that only God could do it, but He could and He did. He made the clock go backwards." There was silence for a few moments, then Father went on, "Perhaps one of the reasons why God did that miracle for Hezekiah was to show us all that He is so great and so good that He will blot out our past if we wish it."

James could keep it back no longer, so very sadly he told his father what was worrying him, and then together they confessed the sin to the Lord Jesus who is the only one who can forgive sins. So the wonders of the morning were not to

be compared with the wonder of that moment at bedtime when the Lord blotted out James's wrong-doing and made it as if it had never been. He slept peacefully, for a great burden had been taken from his heart. His mother and father, although sad at what he had done, were at the same time very glad that he had confessed and been forgiven. They knew that they would have carried burdens of guilt if the Saviour had not also forgiven them. For all who wish that the clock could be put back, there is a wonderful promise: "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee" (Isaiah 44. 22). Only God can do it—but He can, and He will.

H. F.

THE CROSS AND THE MINISTRY OF MONEY

INDIVIDUAL AND CHURCH FINANCE

THAT God has so signally honoured and blessed the ministry of systematic and proportionate giving, is its own argument for the high place that this subject must take in our spiritual deliberations. We are not descending to a lower plane when we give this matter a place for consideration. As a matter of fact, the wider purposes of Christ are seriously linked with this subject.

Let us briefly touch upon the significance of some of the utterances of Christ in connection with the ministry of money.

I. Firstly, recall the *Principle of Stewardship*, as enunciated by Him (Luke xii. 42, xvi. 1-8).

The elements here are (1) a rich householder, (2) a needy household, and world beyond, (3) a steward between. The steward is brought into a relationship of privilege, trust and responsibility. He is entrusted with resources which are essentially his Master's, and he is expected to regard all that he has in the light of the purposes of his Master for the household and for the world. He will consider every demand supremely and primarily from its value to the things which are closest and dearest to the *heart of the Master*, and his own pleasure will be found in seeing those things fulfilled rather than by any personal, fleshly, or worldly desires or ambitions of his own. He will never dispense his Master's trusts in a way that brings himself into any flesh-gratifying prominence, or divert the honour from the Master to himself. It will always be in his Master's name and not over his own signature.

Such is the "good and wise steward", and the Master has made it very clear that thus to regard

and use all that we have is the sure highway of Divine approval, blessing and reward.

II. Next consider the *Principle of Investment* (Matt. xv. 27). Let us note especially that in the passage cited it is "my money". The whole thought in the parable is that of using the resources with which we are entrusted of God, to the greatest Divinely approved results. There are almost innumerable calls upon these resources, and not a little confusion exists in the minds of Christians as to what is Kingdom Enterprise and what is not. Social, philanthropic, humanitarian, charitable, altruistic, religious, and spiritual, all get jumbled and overlapping. Many are of the generous and magnanimous disposition, and only need a semblance of need or a plausible story to send their hand to their pocket or purse; while others, in the limitation of their immediate means, are often worried as to their duty in the presence of so many clamant calls.

For the fully consecrated life there is this sound principle from the Master: Decide what are the deepest and truest purposes—not of the Christian ethic—but of the *Cross of Christ*, the really *spiritual and eternal objectives of Calvary*, and thus invest to the utmost limit in that which is most calculated to secure these ends. This will mean that all our giving will be fraught with prayerfulness and careful consideration.

III. *The Subordination of Money* (Matt. xix. 16-26).

Closely in line with what we have said comes the

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

test of our interests. The point is, are *spiritual interests* above all others with us? Are money and means an end or an instrument to an end? One has often wondered whether He who knew all men fitted the test to the type, in the passage before us. A real test will be applied sooner or later as to our comparative valuations, and a real crisis will be precipitated if we venture upon a quest for spiritual life and power, and we shall come to the waters of testing as to whether all things will be counted as loss or refuse that we may gain Christ and be found in Him. It may never be that we shall lose all things, but we shall be put to the *test*.

IV. *The Superior Blessedness* (Acts xx. 35).

When the Master said these words, we do not know, we can only surmise, but they are clearly from Him. We need only intimate two elements of this superior blessedness.

(1) It is a blessedness which comes and grows in our spirit as we make possible the realisation of the great purposes of the Cross, and are partakers with Christ in His glorious achievements.

(2) It is the blessedness of enlarged capacity for giving. The more we give for God, the more we can give, the more He makes it possible for us to give.

V. *The Principle of Computation by Comparison* (Mark xii. 41 - 44 ; Luke xxi. 1 - 4).

Here it was not so much what was given, but rather what remained after the gift had been made. Not what the cheque-book showed, but what the pass-book indicated. Is it not such a proportion that we shall find it not difficult? Is it to sacrifice and in faith? Is it for love which counts not the cost? How did Christ come by His great approval of the widow, and affirm the Divine good pleasure? Because at Nazareth, *with a widowed mother and a large family, they had made their sacrifices to be true to the Scriptures*. He had good reason to know the cheapest food in the market—two sparrows for a farthing, and if you could stretch it to two farthings, you got the bargain of an extra sparrow thrown in, five for two farthings. But this sacrifice, in order to be true to the Law which He had come to fulfil, led to the day when the bread-winner, and at least one of His brothers, could leave the home and give themselves unreservedly to the work of the Kingdom. It is a parable.

Finally, let us not forget the importance and value of being systematic. The casual, haphazard giving impresses the giver with a false sense of generosity. We shall find that we really give more,

and it goes farther, if we carefully and systematically divide and apportion our resources, and keep clear and strict accounts. Then our gifts are only acceptable to God if our lives are consecrated. It must be *sanctified* giving. The gift must, and will, remain on the altar until we have put right the 'ought' that any may have against us. It is not things, but ourselves, that God wants. Moreover, all we do will be motivated by our estimate of His Cross. The motive and dynamic of all true service is a love born of an adequate appreciation of His love for us. Is it true that 'the whole realm of nature', if it were ours, would be an 'offering far too small', and that the only sufficient gift is 'our life, our soul, our all'?

So far we have dealt with the subject in a somewhat general way, and one which applies for the most part to the individual. We will now consider its application to

CHURCH FINANCE

It is not the amount of money which is at the disposal of a church which counts, or is to be the standard of judgment, but how far the essential purposes of Christ's Cross are being realised.

There are many churches which have ample financial resources, but are so spiritually bankrupt that they cannot carry on their own ministry effectively without depending upon outside workers. On the other hand, there are many more churches which are unable to carry out the Divinely-appointed work of the Cross because of severely straitened financial means. It will be clear, then, that both of these conditions are a denial and limitation of Calvary, therefore something is wrong.

Now, we must recognize the absolutely firm principles of the Cross before the problem can be solved, and they are these: The Cross sets itself directly and positively against the world and all worldly methods.

It is not necessary here to summarize the teaching of Christ and the Apostles on the world, but suffice it to say that the world is banned and ruled out as antagonistic to the Cross, and the Kingdom of God.

To have the absolute victory of Calvary in service as in life, we must be in complete sympathy with the Cross, and this demands that we shall be 'crucified' to the world, and the world to us. Bazaars, Concerts, etc., to raise funds for Calvary's work, or draw people to Calvary, are of the world-spirit, -method, and -principle, and therefore block the way of Calvary's victory.

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It is usually the most unspiritual and worldly-minded people who urge these things, and the people who count least in the real spiritual work of the church.

Yes! *Calvary's fruit demands Calvary's principles*, and the 'flesh' and 'world' are inimical thereto.

The Cross demands absolute identification of the believer, church, and all methods, means, and resources with its purpose, and what we have said earlier, in the Master's method for His Kingdom.

If the Cross means to the believer and to the

church, union with Christ in His jurisdiction (*Exousia* Matt. xxviii. 18, etc.), through union with His death (to self, and the world—their interests, ambitions, and nature), then the work of Calvary should not be thwarted by temporal circumstances and conditions. Let us, however, beware that we do not draft the programme, but always know what God's plans are. Presumption often makes demands upon God which He cannot recognize. It is surprising what can be done for very little expenditure when lifted off the human level into the spiritual.

“ EVEN BARNABAS ”

“. . . even Barnabas was carried away with their dissimulation.” (*Galatians ii. 13.*)

WHAT a pity that such painful and unhappy incidents should have been placed on record for all time! What a still greater pity that they should ever have happened at all, and that right at the heart of the Apostolic circle in those most vital and crucial of all days! The Holy Spirit, as Custodian of the Divine records, must have had some very justifying reason for causing or allowing such things to be in the Bible. And there are—sad to say—not a few of such things.

When Paul wrote this in his letter there must have been a distinct change in his tone at these words—“ even Barnabas ”.

This is, perhaps, the most vehement of all his letters. He is truly on the war-path in white-hot jealousy for the truth and purity of the Gospel, and he says some very strong things.

But at this point we can discern the mingled tones of surprise, grief, disappointment. “ Even Barnabas ”—Barnabas: the one who had befriended him when, being under suspicion, he stood alone, the other Apostles fearing him and “ not believing that he was a disciple ”! The one who had sought him out at Tarsus as the man needed for the hour! The one who had been committed with him to the work and had laboured and travelled far with him! The one who had seen and shared and gloried in his ministry to the Gentiles! Barnabas, the “ good man ” (*Acts xi. 24.*)! Can it be true?

When certain from James came to Antioch Peter withdrew and others also. Paul does not emit surprise over Peter, only condemnation (*Gal. ii. 11.*) But for race-prejudice and discrimination to approach in his dear friend Barnabas, that shocks him, and he says in astonishment, “ Even Barna-

bas ”! Was this the betrayal of something in Barnabas, which, although for some time it was covered over and they worked on together for a while, yet eventually came out again in another connection and resulted in their permanent separation in the work?

What are we to make of it? Can we, without wrongly judging Barnabas, put our finger on that flaw, that something which so painfully spoiled a relationship? What is it that we are intended to learn from this being put into the glorious story of the first years? What did Paul call it?—dissimulation. What is dissimulation? It is hypocrisy, play-acting; literally it means ‘ from behind a mask ’: pretence, unreality, falsehood.

There is a Scripture that touches this very directly—“ the fear of man bringeth a snare ” (*Prov. xxix. 25.*) Perhaps in other ways Barnabas was not afraid of men, but the weakness—the fatal weakness—that shows itself here is allowing his natural temperament to govern him when most serious issues were in the balances. Barnabas was evidently a very sociable man: that was his temperament. The feature of that temperament is that it does not like to be unpopular; out of standing with people whom it wants to please or who can affect its interests. This, therefore, is the tragedy of compromise for the sake of pleasantness and popularity. This is the disastrous leaning to policy instead of standing firm on principle when serious matters are on hand.

Yes, we know that it was no simple matter for Barnabas. This very incident brings out into clear definition the terrible strength of a system and tradition. All the holy vehemence of the greatest Apostle is drawn out in wrath by the strength of this system. This judaizing element was going to die hard. It had taken the devastating power of a personal appearing in glory on the part of the Lord

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

to break Paul clear of it. It was going to be the everything-or-nothing question from then onward. If a mask of insincerity, prevarication, equivocation, and disguise was being put on, then Paul tore it off with no light hand. He saw too clearly the disaster of both the old system, and of trying to be two contrary things.

In this same chapter verse 20 occurs. Everybody knows Galatians ii. 20. There it is shown that the Cross of Christ puts 'Finish' to this kind of thing. Later in the letter, reference will be made to "the offence of the cross". That offence in this context is in relation to compromise in order to save our face, our standing, our advantage, and so on.

It is a sad revelation, and fact, that a "good man"; one who has seen great service for God; and has had association at close quarters with so much of God's work, can fall into the snare of 'safety first' rather than stand by truth and principle at all costs. This has much to teach us, but it is all summed up in the cry—"Be true!" "Be honest!" "Be transparent!" Do not walk with men first, but walk before God. May it never be that all that may be so good and creditable eventually falls under this verdict—"... even Barnabas was carried away."

So, a great friendship and a vital colleagueship was threatened and then disrupted by—what? Was it a secret jealousy of the outworking of the sovereign choice and using of that 'vessel', the vessel over which Barnabas rejoiced until some personal interest or temperamental weakness was touched? Paul may have been a rather strong and sometimes

overbearing man in the utterness of his abandon to what had come to him "by revelation of Jesus Christ". What he had to be *against*, still marked him as *for* Christ. One thing Paul could not countenance on any account was compromise. He was capable of being both very forceful and forbearing, but he was not capable of being double.

Barnabas may have wanted peace, and would do *anything* for it. But that *anything* might lead him into 'sitting on the fence' or trying to agree with two irreconcilable positions, and the end be that for all time a "good man" made a terrible mistake, so that the potentialities of a great friendship and partnership were lost.

But the work must go on. Barnabas had an overwhelming amount of evidence as to where his friend stood, and how utterly he stood on this, the greatest dispensational, issue, and he allowed himself to be influenced by James and his strong leaning to the Jewish complexion. So, in the transition, which was making distinctions very clear and putting men on this side or on that, Barnabas *eventually* fades out. Silas (Silvanus) fills the gap, and even John Mark who brought the relationship to a crisis becomes—at length—"profitable" to both Peter and Paul.

Turning corners is always a perilous time, and in the turning of the dispensations, in which these early saints were involved, there were not a few casualties.

The Lord help us to be true to all the light available.

TIMES OF CRISIS

"From the horns of the wild-oxen thou hast answered me" (Psalm xxii. 21, R.V.).

THERE are times in our Christian experience when need becomes desperate. Afflictions crowd upon us, burdens become intolerable or distress of body reaches the breaking point. Then it is that our cry becomes urgent, clamant and irresistible.

Among the many promises that assure us that God will not forsake us in extremity none comes with greater vividness than the words of our text. David draws his picture from the wild cattle of Palestine that were noted for their ferocity. He sees himself caught between the horns of a charging ox, utterly impotent to help himself and without hope of rescue. But a cry to God brings deliverance.

All of us at times are driven to the point where

a miracle comes or the end comes. There are times when our circumstances are so low that they can sink no farther. We must perish or rise. Thank God for the promise that in response to living, earnest prayer His mighty hand will lift us to safety!

The question is often asked as to why God allows His children to reach such a dangerous crisis before intervening on their behalf. Earthly parents seem more considerate of their children and protect them from extremes of peril.

We should bear in mind that our soul's development is God's chief concern and that His wisdom is far beyond that of the most thoughtful father. He understands us better than can our most loving friend. He knows the limits of our endurance and can adjust trial to suit our need. He has brought

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us into this world that we might learn to know Him.

We have knowledge of His eternal power and Godhead through the things that He has made. The stars display His glory. The lengthy pages of history trace His footsteps among the nations. We find the revelation of His purposes in the eternal Word, and in Christ shines forth the very effulgence of the Godhead.

In the secret hour of prayer we learn His ways and come to recognize the tender touch of His loving hand. But in times of sudden crisis, when danger chills our heart and drives us to desperation, we most clearly discern the nearness and the

compassion of our Father. We are so constituted that sorrow moves us deeply and jeopardy awakes every chord of our being.

It is loving understanding that looses the wild ox in its furious charge. In that hour we have need of the love that casts out fear and of the child-like simplicity that seeks the way directly to the Father's bosom. To each of us the crisis will come with soul-moving intensity, and we should thank God for the faithfulness that will see us safely through and will give us a part in the Psalmist's chorus, "From the horns of the wild-oxen thou hast answered me."

SELECTED.

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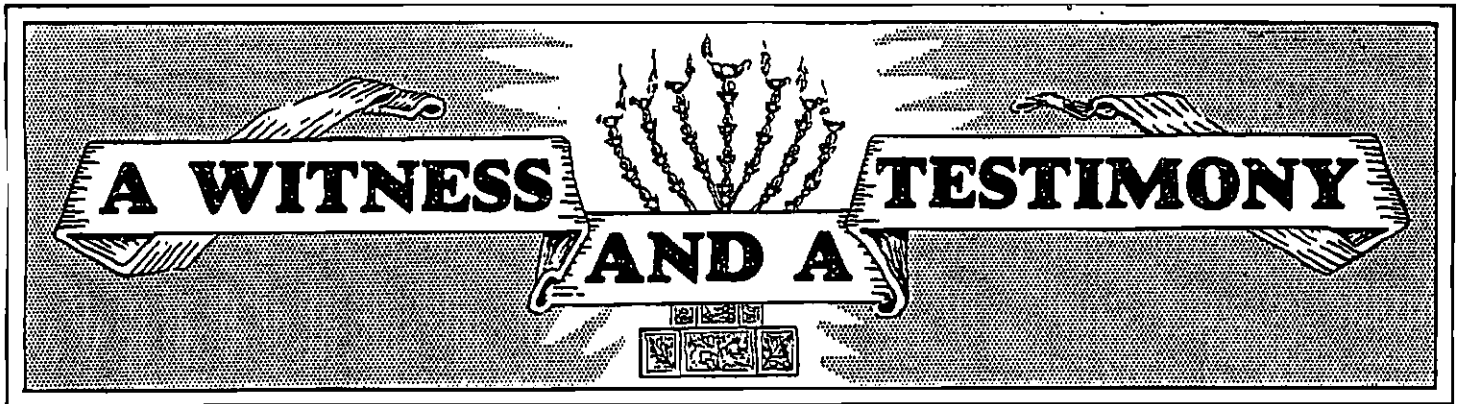
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EDITORIAL

Dear Friends,

This is a brief word of explanation and appreciation.

In our last issue we included a slip asking our readers to let us know whether they desired us to continue mailing the paper to them.

It would involve a great deal of extra work for the secretary to extract from a fairly large mailing list the names of those who have more recently asked for the paper, or about whom we have no doubt in this matter. There is a large enough margin of people to justify our enquiry because of the considerable lapse of time in their writing to us.

We have to run the risk of being misunderstood, or even offending our assured friends, and just send the slip to everybody.

Our sole object is to keep the ministry of this little paper in immediate touch with need, and so to see to it that the mailing list is *alive*. We have no concern to keep the paper going one issue beyond the time when its living value ceases, and only the readers can apprise us of this.

So, will those friends who may have felt our enquiry to be unnecessary or unkind please accept this explanation.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

But having said that, I am more than glad that we sent out that enquiry. It has brought such a volume of appreciative letters and tokens of evaluation—although it was not meant to be a quest for such—that has greatly encouraged and inspired us to pursue this ministry.

The reading of these many letters has strengthened and enlivened a *personal* touch with those who have written, and this is itself of real value.

So, again, we thank you, and take courage.

This present issue is, if, anything, more solid (I trust not 'heavy') than many, and it may call for more than a superficial reading, but we pray that it may prove to be of that kind referred to by the Apostle—"Solid food is for fullgrown men".

This is a superficial age when cheapness, lightness, and 'something-for-nothing' are all too characteristic. We may reduce numbers, but if, as in the case of Gideon's army, reduction is unto calibre and effectiveness, that will be worth while.

Pray for us, as we do for you,

Yours in the Grace of our Lord Jesus,

T. AUSTIN-SPARKS.

HORIZONED BY CHRIST

CHAPTER FOUR

REFERRING back to our original definition and reminding ourselves that the word 'horizon' is the English form of the Greek word *horizo*, and that it is applied to Christ twice in the book of the Acts' (x. 42 ; xvii. 31), its definite meaning being : 'to mark out or off' : horizon is the full range of vision, whether physical or mental. Everything is within its range and sphere. This is what the Bible teaches as to God's Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ. When all these present things are dissolved (II Peter iii. 7, 10, 11—a possibility so much more understandable in the atomic age than when it was written by Peter) and 'the new heavens and the new earth' take their place, then Christ will actually be the Horizon of all things. But He *is that* now in the mind of God, and in all His activities through the Holy Spirit.

In the earlier chapters we have been noting this feature of Christ in the universality of His person, spiritual history and work. It is now our purpose to say more about this in a particular connection. It is by no means a new truth that we are to consider, but, although well known, yet it is one, the

implications of which have all too insufficiently been grasped. It is that the entrance of Jesus Christ into this creation meant

THE BEGINNING OF A NEW HUMANITY.

In this meaning He is the Horizon of the race that is eventually to inhabit God's new Heaven and earth, and it is this that lies behind every Divine activity in this age, from new birth to spiritual perfection.

Into this are gathered the greatest magnitudes and mysteries: the greatness and the mystery of Christ's person ; the profound meaning of the Holy Spirit's work in new birth, spiritual discipline, and sovereign ways ; the evident supreme value of character above all else.

There are four major matters which everyone who takes life seriously must understand. And, sooner or later, this taking life seriously will be forced upon a vast number of people.

These four matters are :

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- i. The meaning of human history: past, present, and future.
- ii. The meaning of Christ and Christianity.
- iii. The meaning of the (true) Church of God.
- iv. The meaning of spiritual experience.

The Bible is the book which embodies God's revelation concerning these four things. The Bible centres in a person—God's Son, and it is one solid revelation of the fact that He is the explanation and interpretation of those four magnitudes.

This will become clear as to all four if we look into the first only.

THE MEANING OF HUMAN HISTORY

We are living in one of the most significant phases of this world's history. It is nothing less than the final stages of a long-drawn-out working of the terrible *permissive* will of God, necessitated by man's deliberate and knowing wrong use of his greatest trust—free will. God hung *everything* for His own pleasure and satisfaction, and man's supreme blessedness, not upon compulsion, which for ever rules out love, but upon free will, voluntary choice. He made it quite clear that man's eternal good lay in the direction of his using that trust in humble, selfless obedience, in a spirit of dependence upon God. This *is* love! He, at the same time, let it be known that only dire consequences would follow in the train of a wrong use of that sacred trust.

When man *chose* to act in mistrust of God and independence of Him, God might have destroyed him there and then, and have started again. But could He? Could He *morally* do that in an act? To have done that would have meant two obvious things. It would have been to violate at once the principle of free-will and say that man could not do as he chose. Thus despotic compulsion would have set aside the possibility of love. Then, who was to say that—given the same liberty—the next man would not repeat the course of the first? Man is a moral creation or he differs not a whit from a beast, a plant, or a machine. That is, he has a sense of right and wrong, and is thereby a responsible creature.

What then did God decide? It was, in some senses, a very grievous decision that He had to make, but it had two sides. On the one side He decided that history must bear its own testimony to the folly and evil of man's self-chosen way; that the nature and implications of that choice should work themselves out in history. But that line of independent action carried with it—and this had

been the warning beforehand—something for which the Bible has three names—'vanity', 'curse', 'death'.

In the Bible 'vanity' means much more than our modern usage means. It is not the superficial thing implied when we speak of a person's vanity; i.e., self-flattering conceit. It means, as does also the word 'curse', that nothing will reach finality. All will, in the end, be in vain. Indeed, everything will turn against man and ultimately meet him with a closed door. Our more modern word (and it is significant how much it is both being used, and is increasing in human experience) is the word 'frustration'. It is something that dogs the steps of human effort and takes the certainty out of every movement.

But we must go back a bit to get into line with the twofold course which we are noting.

Man was made with immense possibilities and potentialities. When he was told to "have dominion", and when it is said, "thou madest him to [in order to] have dominion", no one but God knew the immensity of the kingdom in which he was intended to reign. Certainly man could never have imagined it. But, for all that to be for man's blessedness and ultimate glory, the law was humble, obedient, trustful dependence upon God and an unbroken fellowship with Him.

The violation of that law did not mean the cancellation of those potentialities, but the uniting with them of the element which brought—like a spectre—progressive and ultimate doom. Enmity had entered the very constitution of things, and every effort for peace would only result in more and greater wars. Dissatisfaction had entered the soul of man and, no matter how much he exploited his abilities, to reach satisfaction would only lead to greater discontent. Labour, toil, travail had come into the realm of work and no matter how exhaustive and abandoned in his search for rest man might be, unrest, restlessness, would grow upon him until he was worn out. Lawlessness had entered the creation, and however much he would work, organize, institute, use force or persuasion, all his restraints would be broken through and anarchy, rebellion, violence, delinquency would run side by side with what man calls 'progress' and would make nonsense of his 'education'. Lust had supplanted love, and hand in hand with what is called 'civilization' moral degeneration, passion, and cruelty would blight all refinements. Every amenity, discovery, and invention which promised full alleviation would but be followed by a new problem and complication.

And so, on it goes, until man's greatest of all

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'achievements'—so far—the splitting of the atom, the production of the atom-bomb, has become his greatest-ever menace, constituting an imminent threat to his whole civilization, even to the human race, and putting into human hearts 'a fainting for fear'.

Fear lies behind every effort for security, appeasement, and 'safety by strength'. Never in this world's history, and in such a short period, has there been so much 'progress' and 'advance' (?) accompanied by so much wearing-out frustration and abortive effort. It is startling and bewildering. But of course man is blind to the real meaning of it all. It is a part of the 'curse' that, when his eyes were opened in one direction—his self-hood, they were made blind in another, the all-important other, to the doom of that self-hood out of relation to God.

This is what we mean when we say that we are living in the most significant phase of human history. With a speed which is the characteristic of *everything* in our age man is moving as never before to close the gap and bring in the 'superman' who will finally (?) abnegate God and proclaim the deity of man. Man already believes that he cannot realize himself and at the same time believe in—to say nothing of depend upon—God. As man becomes more God becomes less (to him).

The Bible has long ago told us all about this and what the issue will be, both as to man, the earth, and God's Son.

We spoke of another aspect of the course of history. God marked off a period, a dispensation, in history, and took a nation from the nations to demonstrate to the world this history. In that dispensation, faithfulness to God and dependence upon Him was rewarded in the most literal and practical ways by prosperity and ascendancy.

A people whose only strength and resource was in God was made the head of the nations, and endowed with supernatural powers. Marks of the greatness intended for man, and his 'dominion' are clearly manifested in Israel's faithful days. So God made them His object lesson. When they departed from Him, over a long period He allowed reverse after reverse, shame upon shame, and frustration to fall upon their way, and thus sought to teach the world this historic lesson. When, at length, they carried their rebellion to its consummation in the rejection and crucifixion of His Son, their doom was reached and for two thousand years they have been the most frustrated people on this earth. This story has been written in vivid and ghastly pages in recent years.

But a new age has been brought in. It is the age

in which these historic principles are at work *in a spiritual way*. The true believer in God through Jesus Christ *has peace within*; has purpose over against the world's frustration; has assurance and security in an eternal sense; has hope where despair deepens in men's hearts; has life where 'death' is the frustrating power over all the world's efforts. This is but a hint at the so much more which could occupy all our space. But what is God doing in a hidden way in this dispensation?

He—as the Bible says—is 'taking *out of the nations* a people for His Name'. He is working in that people the power of a different humanity. He has introduced and instated the Pattern, the Archetype, the "last Adam", and is working according to Him. Those who have received this new life and are the subjects of the inward operation of the Spirit of the New Creation are to form together the "one new man", the "fullgrown man . . . of the stature of the fulness of *Christ*" of which the New Testament speaks (Eph. ii. 15; iv. 13). Christ is the Horizon of this new humanity.

We have just so lightly touched upon the meaning of history, but our object over all is to show that Christ Himself is the meaning of history on both of its sides. So He has been "ordained" (horizoned) to be from eternity to eternity.

But we have to come much closer to the meaning of this.

THE HORIZON OF SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

Not only does the New Testament reveal that in this dispensation God is *taking out* of the nations a people for His Name, but it is a solid mass of revelation that every additional member of that people becomes an object of deep—ever deepening—activity of God in terms of discipline, testing, emptying, breaking, and re-making on another pattern. A twofold process is being carried through to a point of finality. The old humanity with its mental, moral, and sometimes physical powers is being exhausted and proved impotent *in the realm of spiritual things*. A new kind of ability, not natural but extra-natural, or supernatural, is deeply—usually unconsciously—being instated. The subjects of this process, while very conscious of the former aspect, are often—we might say usually—only aware of the other supernatural side as they know that their very survival at all is a miracle, for naturally they had seen nothing but disaster facing them, and, like Paul, they felt that they had 'the sentence of death-within themselves'.

There is a great difference between the work of

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Divine power in us, even "the exceeding greatness of his power", and our feeling it or being conscious of it. Yet, just as our 'translation into the kingdom of the Son of His love' was a supernatural thing, the expression of power more than all that is human, so is the keeping, maintaining, and ascendancy of those in that kingdom. What is true of the Divine power, is also true of understanding. That God's ways defeat and defy natural understanding is better known by those in His school than by all others. Spiritual understanding is not firstly intellectual, it is heart-assurance. We can be utterly bewildered in reason, but deeply assured in heart.

This is the very point to which we have now come in our consideration. The life, history, and experiences of a child and servant of God are an enigma to the world and to the natural man. And even to the unperfected child of God the word 'Why?' may often be his cry. That 'Why?' can be set over against so many perplexities and be-

wildering experiences. Is there a key, an answer, an explanation? Yes, there is, but it is no easier for the *natural* man in us to accept it when it is offered. Whether we like it or not, whether we accept it or reject it, the Bible comes down—so to speak—with both feet and there is overwhelming proof that God is far, far more concerned with a certain kind of manhood than with anything else. If this were not the case, then God would be involved in terrible contradictions. He would also be involved in terrible defeat. Work for God in this present world is fraught with many contradictions, defeats, and enigmas. But when God makes spiritual character and the measure of Christ His all-governing object, there is no defeat while man remains in faith and submission.

Here, for the moment, we break off, but let us—if necessary—adjust to this truth overwhelmingly revealed in the Bible, that God is supremely set upon a kind of Man, and that Man is "the image of his Son".

(to be continued)

RAISED FROM THE DUST

Reading: I Samuel i.

"He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, he lifteth up the needy from the dunghill, to make them sit with princes and inherit the throne of glory" (I Samuel ii. 8).

THE book of the Judges describes poor and needy Israel in the dust and on the dunghill. The books which bear Samuel's name show how the nation was lifted and made to "sit with princes and inherit the throne of glory". Between these two, and providing the turning point for the great transformation, was the prayer-travail of one weak woman, Samuel's mother.

Hannah's song was the introduction to some of the most glorious pages in Israel's history. For hundreds of years, the people of God had lived in spiritual and moral squalor, with only occasional relief when one of the judges was raised up to bring them deliverance. This was no kingdom of God on earth; indeed it was no true kingdom at all, for men had no alternative to doing what was right in their own eyes, since there was no expression of the throne of God among them. However, by the time that Samuel died, God's true

king had been anointed. As the second book of Samuel unfolds, we find that king, David, actually administering the rule of God among His people. And if we enquire about the secret of this great change, we find that it was all due to prayer. It was prayer which enabled God to lift His people from the dust and from the rubbish heap, and the prayer began with Hannah.

DEPRIVATION

The story of Hannah's prayer is one of persistence in the face of great difficulties. It also shows how her own desires and motives were purified, even as she prayed. It is this purifying of motive which explains and justifies the Lord's strange ways with her, as it does with us also. She began with a request which was largely centred in herself and her own experience. She emerged at last into a large realm of pure concern for the reputation of her Lord and occupation with His chosen king and His universal kingdom. In the chapter which forms our reading, we can trace the various factors which had a part in this triumph of prevailing prayer.

It was her own conscious need which first drove

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ner to prayer. To her the only proper justification for life was to be found in children who would carry on into the future the values of her having been in the world at all. Without children life was a failure; yet she had no children. This was no chance happening for it is clearly stated that the Lord had ordered that it should be so. It may well have seemed unreasonable, or even cruel, as God's deprivations sometimes do. Here was her rival rejoicing in both sons and daughters, and here was she alone, and with no answer from Heaven to all her prayers. For there can be no doubt that she and her husband did seek God's help in this matter. "Year by year" they went up together to the house of the Lord to seek His favour, but year by year He deliberately withheld her dearest desire.

The truth was, of course, that the Lord had purposes much larger than her own personal satisfaction, and was working in His wisdom to draw her into fellowship with Himself. She could not have known this. All that she knew was that God appeared not to heed her and not to care, that He left her seemingly incapable of bearing the child for which she longed.

The miracle was that she did not give up. It would not have been difficult to have adopted a fatalistic attitude, for to the natural mind it may well seem that if God withholds, then the only thing to do is to say no more. The true believer, however, is no fatalist. Far from it. For such the apparent denial is only a challenge to seek God more earnestly. Hannah could not yield to the seeming inevitable in a weak spirit of passivity. No! What might have become an argument to stop praying only served as a greater incentive to continue in prayer. This was just what God was looking for, a soul who would not be put off, who would press her enquiry and her request until she received the answer from the Lord.

PROVOCATION

Such experiences, however, are not very often a simple issue between a soul and the Lord. There are other elements which have a place, and in Hannah's case one of these was the hostility and ridicule of her husband's other wife, Peninnah. No doubt this continued all the year round, but we understand that it reached its climax during their annual visits to Shiloh. How often Satan's cruellest attacks come where we would least expect them. There, in the house of the Lord, in the presence of the most sacred features of their faith, in that very place the accuser intensified her attacks, robbing her of the comfort and peace which

should have filled her heart. Those visits to God's house which should have brought peculiar joys became times of bitter sorrow and tears.

We are apt to resent this kind of attack, and to indulge either in self-pity or in self-justification. Hannah may have done this at first. If so, she must have delighted this rival of hers, for the whole purpose of such behaviour is to draw us out of communion with the Lord. Happily Hannah found a way of victory. Instead of being drawn away from the Lord, she drew closer to Him; instead of wasting time and strength in arguing with her attacker, she took her complaint to God. Although she was in bitterness of soul she persevered in prayer.

Why did not Elkanah silence this troublesome member of his household? For some reason or other he was not able to do so. But "God is able". Even if her husband was weak, God is not weak, so that Hannah must often have asked herself why He did not intervene on her behalf. It is impossible for us to explain the Lord's way, but in this case it does seem likely that this was His way of allowing Hannah to be forced up on to higher ground spiritually. There is always a Divine purpose when God refrains from working just as much as there is when He acts on our behalf. The purpose was realised, for in the midst of her distress and tears Hannah came to a decision. "She vowed a vow, and said, O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid and remember me . . . and wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord . . ." (v. 11). What an amazing outcome of taunting and provocation! It all resulted in the birth of that which should be especially dedicated to the Lord. So it is that He makes even the wrath of man to praise Him, when He finds co-operation from a soul which remains steadfast through the trials of faith.

DISCOURAGEMENT

It was at this juncture, though, that a very subtle attack was made on her faith, and it was made through the one who loved her best and wished only for her good. At first Elkanah had doubtless shared with Hannah in seeking the Lord that they might have a child; we may be sure that his prayers mingled with hers. The years went by, however, and there was no answer from God, so he gradually came to accept the situation, and because of his concern for Hannah he tried to make her accept it too. "Am I not better to thee than ten sons?" was certainly a well-intentioned re-

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monstrance. It represented tenderness and a genuine desire to comfort her. But suppose she had accepted this kindly counsel. Suppose she had dried her tears and decided to accept things as they were and make the best of them! There would have been no more prayer, no vow, no song of triumph, and no prophet Samuel.

It is well for us to realise how human affection, kindly counsel and well-meaning advice can hinder the purposes of God. Was it not in this way that Satan made one of his subtlest attempts to dissuade Christ from going to the Cross, using the warm heart and impulsive words of Peter, His would-be friend, to suggest that there must be an easier way? With the Lord Jesus this satanic use of natural love had no success. With Hannah, too, it did not succeed. The pity is that so many Christians fail where she triumphed. Some who cannot be deterred by opposition, when discouragement adopts kindlier tones and offers appeals based on affection, then their purpose weakens and their prayers cease.

It could not have been easy for the Lord Jesus to say what He did to Peter, so brusquely rejecting the well-intentioned words of discouragement. With Hannah, also, it must have been very painful to have the one most closely related to her suggesting that she should abandon all her expectations. We are not told of any answer which she gave. There is little that one can say under such circumstances. We do know, though, that this appeal of Elkanah's did not turn her aside from her prayers; she refused to accept his alternative. "So Hannah rose up . . . (v. 9). She made one more approach to the Lord. If Elkanah could not join with her, then she would pray alone. She went out of the house and as far as the temple, where at the door, in sight of Eli, the high priest, she prayed and made her great vow to Heaven.

DISAPPOINTMENT

At this point she met with the worst rebuff of all. She must have known of the poor spiritual state of things in God's house, for she made no attempt to enlist the help of Eli. He it was who should have done the praying. That is what he was there to do. She should have been able to explain her case to him with the assurance that he was a man who had access to God and who would best know how to present her petition at the Throne of Grace. But even a simple country woman knew this was not possible, for "men despised the offering of the Lord" (ii. 17). Through the failures of His servants, the very name of the Lord was no longer

honoured. It was enough to make her question whether there was any value at all in praying. Many who were stronger and wiser than she, had already done so. It is a terrible thing when the bad behaviour of the Lord's servants has the effect of making people turn away from the Lord Himself. This is what was happening in Shiloh, and it is greatly to Hannah's credit that the faultiness of His servants could not shake her faith in God Himself.

There was worse than silence from Eli—there was positive misunderstanding. "How long wilt thou be drunken?" was the only contribution which he could give to an anxious woman who was seeking the Lord in her distress. Now she had borne much mocking and many sneers from Peninnah, but she had been able to triumph over it all. No doubt she consoled herself with the knowledge that this other wife was moved by jealousy at the extra attention given to Hannah by their husband. Eli's case, however, was different. Here was the chief representative of the God to whom she wished to pray, the custodian of the Divine precincts which she had entered; here he was, misunderstanding her actions and imputing evil to her without a cause. Most of us would have lost our tempers, have risen up with sharp words of reproof at this unkindness and decided that we would have nothing more to do with prayer or with God's house.

Hannah did none of these things; she kept calm and steadfast in her faith. So sure was she that the Lord had understood, even if His servant had not, that she took it for granted that she had her petition and acted accordingly. As yet there was no evidence that God had begun to work, but this made no difference. Faith does not wait to see the answer before it can offer praise. Faith, also, must express itself in actions, or it is not true faith. "So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad" (v. 18).

TRUE TO HER VOW

It must have been a wonderful day when the infant Samuel was born, yet we are not told of any special rejoicing in the home at Ramah. The great song of exultation which is recorded in chapter ii was not for the joy of receiving, but for that of giving. This is true to spiritual experience. Blessed as it may be to find the Lord granting us what we have wanted, the greater blessing always comes when we hand the gift back to Him for His use absolutely.

Hannah never forgot her vow. When the baby was still very small, the whole household pre-

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ared to make its annual visit to the Lord's house, and it might have been natural enough that she who had so much cause for praise should have been a prominent member of the party. She, however, decided otherwise. Perhaps she feared that if she got used to taking the child up to Shiloh and then bringing him back home again, she would never have the courage and faith when the time came to hand him over completely to the Lord. If she was to be true to her vow, the day must come when she would return home empty-handed, having given her son to God as she had promised. She felt it wiser, and perhaps safer, to make only one journey, and wait for that until the moment had come to give him back to God. It is so easy for us to keep on postponing the actual issue, so very easy for us to think that we will do it next time. Much better to hand over everything to Him in one decisive act.

After that she could bear to visit him, indeed could enjoy her visits. This gift of God to her was now her gift back to God. No sooner was the transaction completed than she burst out into her magnificent hymn of praise. Only those who have done what Hannah did can appreciate the joy which she now felt. And they find, as she found, that the Lord refuses to be in our debt. Three

more sons and two daughters followed Samuel, as a proof that the Lord really means it when He assures us that to let go to Him is to be greatly enriched, while to refuse to do so only means sorrow and loss. If Hannah had not kept her vow, if after all she had decided to keep the lad at home, away from the corrupt influences at Shiloh, how great would have been the loss to Israel. And how great would have been her own loss too! Her decision not to go up to Shiloh until she could make the definite sacrifice of giving Samuel back to the Lord showed that she had no intention of allowing such losses. Her husband showed real understanding at this decision. Possibly it came as a surprise to him, but he was content to let Hannah follow her own sense of what was best. ". . . only the Lord establish his word", he added (v. 23). What he meant surely was, Do not let us come thus far and then fail to go right through with our purpose. This is a good exhortation for all of us. Through deprivation, provocation, discouragement and disappointment we shall find the Lord faithful. Let us see to it that we put everything back into His hands. So, and only so, shall we learn the secret of true worship and serve God in our generation as Hannah did in hers.

H. F.

HORIZONED BY PURPOSE

CHAPTER FOUR

WHEN we speak of anything being a criterion, we mean just what the dictionary gives as the definition, i.e., 'the principle taken as the standard of judging'; 'any established law or principle by which propositions or opinions are compared, in order to discover their truth'. So a criterion is that by which the truth and value of any matter is determined. By such-and-such a principle or fact the whole thing stands or falls; is true or false. What then is our objective in relation to Divine purpose. Can we put our finger definitely upon that Divine Purpose and see that it is the climax, the culmination of all God's ways? Well, what is that climax, that one Divine end, by which everything is to be judged, now and for ever?

In these chapters we have been allowing the prophet Ezekiel to be our guide and interpreter, seeing that the book which goes by his name is not only a book about prophecies and history, but a book of spiritual principles with a much greater context than earth and time. When we reach the

end of that book, we find ourselves in the presence of that great ultimate, that universal climax, that realised purpose, and it is all summed up in the brief, though vast, phrase:

"THE LORD IS THERE".

What a wide field is opened by that climactic phrase! The Bible is bounded by this supreme concept. It opens and closes with the presence of God with man. It is *the* governing issue throughout all its pages and phases. There are almost countless aspects of this one thing, but, be it so, the issue is just this alone: Is the Lord there or is He not? Is the Lord in that or is He not? Is the Lord with that, with him or her, in that place, in that decision or course, or is He not? That is the criterion. His presence with unfallen man and His departure from disobedient man is an eternal principle. His presence in the beginning indicates purpose. His presence by the Incarnation of His Son is unto the

redemption of the purpose. His presence by the Holy Spirit is to make that purpose actual as an inward thing.

The major aspects force us back to basic considerations. Let us not hurry on with greatness of vision, but pause and quietly tell ourselves that what is more vital and important than anything else in all our life is that the Lord is with us. Futility, vanity, disappointment and remorse will most certainly overtake us, sooner or later, and overtake all our undertakings if, at length, it should be found that the Lord is not with us. It is a perilous thing to go on without the Lord. Moses, who *did* know something, cried: "If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence". Mere assumption in this matter may well prove to have been fatal presumption. "Supposing him to be in the company" may lead to the necessity to retrieve the value of the whole journey (Luke ii. 44).

The Bible shows that nothing can be done which will be of eternal value unless God is in it.

When we have settled this basic fact and let it become the ever- and all-dominating principle in life and work, we are ready to appreciate certain other things which stand out so clearly in this connection. The first of these is:

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S METICULOUS AND SCRUPULOUS EXACTNESS.

If the Holy Spirit is jealous for the main object, He is shown to be equally jealous for the detailed features. This can be seen in various connections.

If the creation and man were intended for the presence of God, they had to be a meticulous expression of God's mind. God was Himself the Architect. God was Himself working scrupulously to a Pattern. (The whole Bible shows that Pattern to be His Son.) The Holy Spirit became the Custodian and energy of that Pattern. Nothing was haphazard, left to chance, or left to man or angels to conceive or design.

Another great and forceful example of the principle was the Tabernacle of Testimony. Here, again, nothing in design, even to a pin or a stitch, a measurement, a material, a position, was left to man. It was all to be according to "the pattern shewn". The Holy Spirit took charge of the artisans, and only when 'all things were according to the pattern' did God presence Himself. The slightest deflection would have meant that it was only an empty shell without God.

The same is to be noted in the Temple of Solomon and the Temple of Ezekiel's vision.

When it comes to the consummate presentation of that which (Him who) is typified in the Old Testament—the Incarnate Son of God—"Emmanuel, *God with us*"—again, the Spirit of God takes over and governs all the details of His conception, birth, life, history, works, death, resurrection, etc. See the place of the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus. God's Son will Himself declare that "the Son can no nothing of [out from] himself, but . . . the Father" (John v. 19).

After the Person comes

THE CORPORATE BODY — THE CHURCH.

The Architect is God the Father. The Builder is God the Son. The Custodian and energy is God the Holy Spirit.

Here, again, nothing in conception and planning is left to angels or men. If man interferes, insinuates himself, and tries to organize or run the Church, so much the worse for the man, as the New Testament both shows in results and declares in words. Nothing but confusion, frustration and shame can follow man's hand upon that which exists wholly for the presence of God.

The last chapters of the Bible must be read in the light of all the immediately preceding chapters. There we see the progressive judgment in every realm—beginning with the churches—of everything unsuitable to the presence of the Lord. The end is all that removed and a state—symbolically represented—which is suitable to Him, and "the Lord is there".

What a challenge all this is: to the Christian to "walk in the Spirit": for the Church and the churches to be governed and sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

The hand of man is a defiled thing. Only "he that hath clean hands, and a pure heart" can "ascend into the hill of the Lord". We may not put our hand on one another for judgment or control. We may not put our hand on the House of God. We may not (like Uzza) put our hand on the ark. Woe to Uzza, to Ananias and Sapphira, to Diotrophes, who touch the holy things of the Lord's presence with fleshly hands of natural strength, ambition, and pride!

How safe it is to be where the Lord is if, through the Cross, we are made suitable. How dangerous it is even to draw near without taking off the shoes of association with the cursed world!

These are shorter chapters in the 'Horizon' series, but they are particularly concentrated and must be taken more for intrinsic values than for volume of material.

(to be continued)

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

HOW TO WIN THE GOOD FIGHT

MIKE was a drummer boy in the army, and he was a bad boy too. He was the ringleader among the others in any mischief which they could do, and was always on the lookout for further bad deeds to be added to those he had already committed. In their Garrison town there was a Soldiers' Home, but Mike had always kept well away from it, for he did not want to be told that he was a sinner, and he had no intention of changing his ways.

The night came, however, when he did pay it a visit. A companion had told him that in the cloak-room of the Home there were towels which could easily be stolen. Now Mike had no special need of a towel, but the urge to do evil just for the sake of it caused him to make up his mind that he would pay the Home a visit, and help himself to some towels.

When he arrived there the place was strange and he did not want to attract attention so he found a door which looked as though it might be the cloak-room, opened it boldly and walked in. Imagine his surprise to find that it was a small meeting room, and that a meeting had started. Before he could collect his thoughts, the Army Scripture Reader had come towards him with a welcoming hand and shown him where to sit down.

Whether the leader really thought that he had intended to come to the meeting or not, Mike did not know, but he made as though he did, and soon the lad found himself singing hymns with the rest and trying to follow the reading from a Bible which had been put into his hands. Testimonies followed, in which some of the soldiers told how they had come to realise their need of a Saviour, and to know how utterly lost they would be without Christ. They told, too, in their own simple way, how the Lord Jesus had forgiven their sins and changed their lives.

This was so different from Church Parade and so different from the only sermons which Mike had ever heard, that in spite of himself he listened with great attention. He forgot, for a moment, all about the towels, and then he remembered them again as he began to realise how lost in sin he was. He made up his mind that in the future he would try to live a better life.

He also decided that as soon as the meeting was over he would slip quietly away, but he had not

reckoned with the Scripture Reader, who again stood before him with outstretched hand. He held Mike's hand firmly and looking him straight in the face, asked if he would not commit his life to Christ that very night. This was more than Mike had expected, but as he stayed to talk he was shown how simple it is to open one's heart to the Saviour, but also how vain it is to try to live a better life without the power of Christ within.

So the happy outcome of that mistaken entry into what seemed the wrong room, was that Mike became a true Christian and at once began to tell his companions of the reason for his changed life.

Those who had been his friends now turned against him. At first they tried to laugh it off, but then they began to persecute him. Now Mike had a quick temper and until then most of the boys had been afraid of him, but now that he tried to bear their scoffing patiently, they became bold and cruel in their attacks upon him. Sandy was the worst of them, but Mike bore all his attacks with patience.

One day, however, while they were at a meal, Sandy went too far. Mike could bear it no longer. White with rage, he left his meal, told Sandy that he would give him a thrashing when he got outside, and walked out of the mess. Sandy went a little white, too, for he knew that if Mike left off being a Christian to fight him, then he was in for a bad time.

The meal-time was not yet over, but Mike had been so mad with rage that he had not realised that he would have to wait. He took off his tunic, rolled up his sleeves, and was ready for the fight. From the moment of his conversion he had been taught to get a daily message from his New Testament, so as he still had time to wait, he felt that he would like such a message now. What was it? "Fight the good fight"? Yes, that was in the Bible, and that was just the kind of encouragement he needed.

He turned over the pages, searching for the bit about "the good fight", but he could not find it. Then his eyes fell on Ephesians 4. 32: "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you". Yes, it was true that God had forgiven him. But now he was told that he must forgive in the very same way. This made Mike pause.

Just at this very moment the door opened, the lads came eagerly out to see the fight, and last of all, rather slowly, came Sandy. He saw Mike put down his New Testament and come towards him, but instead of a blow he was offered a hand. "I am sorry I lost my temper", Mike confessed, and added, "Will you shake hands?" It was a very astonished Sandy who took the hand, and a shame-faced one too. He was surprised to be forgiven in this way, but more than that, he was so impressed that he began to make his own enquiries about the Christian life. Instead of being Mike's enemy he

became his friend, and soon his fellow-believer. Kindness had won him for Christ.

There is a verse which tells us, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12. 21). That is what Mike had done. At first he was nearly overcome of evil. His temper almost got the better of him. He might have beaten Sandy but he would have been beaten himself and have spoiled his witness for Christ. But the Word of God helped him, as it will help us, and so he was able to defeat evil by a victory of love. He overcame not by fighting but by forgiving.

H. F.

THE STEWARDSHIP OF THE MYSTERY

EDITOR'S NOTE. *The two volumes of THE STEWARDSHIP OF THE MYSTERY have been out of print for some years. We have been—and still are being—continuously asked for these. We are unable to reprint the whole in volume form at present, but have decided—as the Lord enables—to run some rewritten chapters through the WITNESS AND TESTIMONY.*

INTRODUCTORY

"To make all men see [marg. 'to bring to light'] what is the stewardship of the mystery which from all ages has been hid in God . . ." (Ephesians iii. 9).

THERE are some pertinent and serious questions which lie behind this consideration. It has always been cheaply easy to criticize Christianity and the Christian Church. We are well aware of that, and its peril of treachery and disloyalty. We could be deterred from anything that looks like a criticism by the fear of real or alleged spiritual pride, superiority, and arrogance. But—as in the case of Nehemiah, Daniel, and others such—we cannot take an objective position. Rather, as they, so we are involved, and have to speak of 'the state that we are in'. It is a matter of 'we', 'our' and 'us'. That sense of involvement and identity, however, did not make them silent and inactive. They had to cry out, to pray, to speak, and to act.

The doubt about things being all well with the Church has become a very big one, a very far-reaching one, and one which is born of a recognition of much weakness, ineffectiveness, and loss of authority. A state of confusion, frustration, and impotence is bringing great discredit upon the Church and much dishonour to the Lord. While,

not so long ago, Christian leaders boasted of the great traditions of their particular form of denominational heritage and attributed these to the sovereignty of God, in our time the most common phrase in Christian circles is 'Our unhappy divisions' or 'Our man-made divisions', etc.

Then again, for years—many years—there has been a tremendous prayer-outreach for 'Revival'. Nights, days, and weeks have been set apart to seek God for this. Everything has been resorted to with a view to finding the ground for revival. All the techniques and supposed bases have been drawn from historic occasions in order to get a repetition. But there is no response in the way and to the dimensions expected or sought for. Does it mean that God is so reluctant as to need all this exhausting pressure to do something for His own glory. Or are we to look deeper and further for an explanation. This is an enquiry, not a suggestion that 'we have the answer'. It is something to be taken account of that this absence of life, of power, of impact, of vital testimony is not universal. There are places where it is otherwise, but *mainly* in the East and not in the West. Does this carry a significance which may go to the very heart of the situation. Let us consider it at once, in its wider and closer context.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

THE EXAMPLE OF ISRAEL

God, in old times, gave to Israel a revelation of His great and specific purpose for which He had sovereignly chosen them to be the vessel and the vehicle.

While they were true to the 'vision' the Lord let the world know of His presence and power in their midst, and, although every form of opposition surrounded them, they were invincible.

It was the Divine purpose which determined everything, and their faithfulness thereto removed the onerous burden from their shoulders on to God's.

When the vision was lost or dimmed, departed from, violated, or held lightly, cheaply, and allowed to sink into disrepute, the whole situation changed. They lost their place and influence in the nations. Confusion, division, and disintegration became characteristic, and God would not answer their prayers.

"Where there is no vision the people fall apart" was a prophetic dictum. Vision there relates to the revelation of purpose given. We put it in the form of a question so as not to dictate but to draw our reader into the enquiry. Is not the history of the Christian Church (the historical Church) and its present state *very largely* a repetition of that of Israel?

God gave to the Church at the beginning a far greater revelation of His purpose than was ever given to Israel. By mighty signs and works He confirmed it. By many Prophets and Apostles He interpreted it. In one unique and outstanding act from Heaven He apprehended a vessel for its fullest unfolding—"To make all men see". And in those pristine days when the vision governed and an utter committal to it was characteristic of

the Church, enemies there certainly were, a world of adverse forces, and a hell stirred up to its depth. Yet the Church was invincible and "mightily grew the word", and "much people was added". But—oh, tragic 'but'—the Church left its heavenly position and came down to the earth level. It departed from and lost "the heavenly vision", the sense of its 'on-high calling'. It divided, disintegrated, became full of confusion, and—well, we know the rest.

No, it did not repudiate Christianity or Christ, in the main. It did not cease to do its 'works', to have its meetings, to maintain a technique, and to have more or less blessing. But loss there was and is, and no smug complacency can withstand the growing pressure and increasing stress. Having said that, and volumes could be filled (and are being filled) with that sort of thing, it is all very negative, although so real. We have not set out to enlarge upon tragedy, we must take up the constructive side.

The conclusion to which we have come, rightly or wrongly, God knows, is that where God has taken pains to give the revelation of His Purpose in fulness and that revelation has been let go, lost, or departed from, it is a law established in the very constitution of things that the presence and power of God recedes—maybe slowly, but inevitably—and a time comes when He is not inside but outside, "the glory is departed".

As in the days of the prophets, and as in later apostolic times, the ear was turned away, and the warning refused, so it can be in the most needy times.

This brings us to the main purpose of these messages, and to consider the vision once given, the pattern once shown.

CHAPTER ONE

"According to the eternal purpose" (Ephes. i. 9 - 11)

INTO two phrases the Apostle gathers all the immense significance of this present dispensation. Those phrases are "The stewardship of the mystery", and "According to the eternal purpose". We must define the terms. The statement (Eph. iii. 2 - 5, etc.) is that this present dispensation is that in which something momentous, which had been hid in God from all other ages and generations, has been disclosed. The immensely significant thing is called "The Mystery". What does 'mystery' mean? It certainly is not a myth.

It is not something which just has a mysterious element about it. It is not an illusion, something illusive, intangible, unreal. God has not been playing a game of 'hide and seek' through the ages. What He has kept as His secret, hidden, undisclosed, and unannounced, has been the greatest, the most real and vastly important thing ever conceived in His mind.

So, "mystery" in this connection, means God's undisclosed secret. Something lay hidden behind all His ways and means through the ages; hinted

at, symbolized, embodied in type and parable, but never stripped of its covering and wrapping. It was something suspected by Prophets, and something which they sometimes seemed to be very near to touching; but it was never fully revealed to them. The full and real meaning of things which the Spirit of God made them say was never clearly apprehended by them.

Now, says Paul, two things have happened. The dispensation or age has come in which that "mystery", that secret has been disclosed, brought out into the light, stripped of its wrappings, and made available for all men to know. Then, while this revelation has been entrusted to all God's "apostles and prophets" (Eph. iii. 5), he, Paul, was *in a particular and fuller way* chosen as a vessel for its revelation. Paul claimed for himself a special revelation of and entrustment with this special ministry—"If ye have heard of the stewardship . . . which was given to me . . . how that by revelation was made known unto me the mystery . . . ye can perceive my understanding in the mystery . . . whereof I was made a minister" etc. (Eph. iii. 1 - 13).

It would not be difficult to trace—in the light of Paul's later writings—when and how this 'revelation' came to him, and how all his spiritual history conformed to it. Something of that is certain to come out as we proceed, but at present we have to take account of these facts.

1. This age is a special age in the history of this world. It is marked off by and for a particular purpose, and that purpose is greater than anything in past "ages and generations".

2. While not exclusively, yet in a particular way, by a unique intervention from Heaven, a certain "vessel" was "apprehended" to be the recipient and "minister" of that particular age-revelation.

3. It is *that* revelation which is the criterion—the measuring standard—by which all things are, and will be, judged and determined as to God's satisfaction.

4. That revelation is the occasion of the most persistent, violent, malignant and many-sided fury and assault of the satanic kingdom, using everything that offers any ground for its purpose.

Before we can come to look at the nature of the "revelation", or at what the "purpose" is, we must enlarge upon some of those points mentioned, because it is vital to this whole consideration that we are sufficiently impressed with the greatness and seriousness of this whole matter. Remember, we are seeking to get behind the

tragedy and breakdown of the Church's testimony and authority in this universe. We are reaching out to find the secret of God's committal of Himself and His release from limitation in His Church. These are not small things. So we have first to go a very long way back to what we may call—

THE ETERNAL COUNSELS.

Here we can only use the language of men and in so doing mentally visualize things which cannot really be understood except in the Spirit. There are quite a number of statements and inferences which indicate a kind of session of the Godhead in which certain superlative and ultimate decisions were reached.

It is a very wonderful thing that we should be given glimpses of these counsels and communings of the Godhead—so to speak. There is the timeless time when they took place—"before the foundation of the world" (Eph. i. 4), "before times eternal" (II Tim. i. 9; Titus i. 2). Then there is the deliberation—"who worketh all things after the counsel of his will"; "according to his good pleasure which he purposed"; "the mystery of of his will"; "according to the purpose"; "fore-ordained"; "chose"; "he purposed"; "works . . . afore prepared" (Eph. i. 4 - 11; ii. 10; Rom. viii, 28, 30, etc.).

These and many other references show that behind this age there lie definite Divine devisings, plannings, purposings, and determinings. Nothing is haphazard or left to chance, and even the contingencies of man's sin, error, rebellion, and failure are provided against.

The Bible is comprehended by these counsels in three major and inclusive features of Divine sovereignty.

1. The Purpose of God. Fixed and unchanging.
2. The Ways of God. Varying, numerous, and passing.
3. The Rule of God. Unquestionable. Infallible.

That is the background against which the dispensation in which we live is placed, and if that is so, we are prisoners of the Divine counsels. Whether we (the Church or individuals) are fugitive, delinquent, negligent, or careless, the possession of a Bible—especially a New Testament—puts us into a place of very great privilege or responsibility. We have the disclosure of eternal counsels in our possession and by that disclosure the Spirit of God helps the committed or judges the careless or rebellious. It was in this knowledge that Paul called himself "the prisoner of Jesus Christ", and

both as to himself and all believers set the standard of utterness of committal. All his urgings and warnings, his appeals and concern, by example and precept, sprang from this knowledge of the immense significance of this dispensation, and of his own calling in that relationship.

That brings us to an enlargement upon

PAUL'S PLACE IN THE DISPENSATION

This is not to make Paul the centre or to give him an importance which is unbalanced and out of proportion. If Paul were of small significance, then all that has come through him can be derated. All his enemies and critics would be justified. But—the Lord Jesus apart—Paul has been a greater factor to be reckoned with than has any other man since Christianity began. And he still holds that position. We leave the realm of theological-philosophical debate to those who like it, and come close to Paul spiritually. It has sometimes been said that when the Apostles proceeded, as they did, to fill the vacancy caused by the departure of Judas, they made a mistake and should have waited the five or more years to the time when Paul was ready for apostleship. It is said to have been a mistake because God had His man in view, and Paul should have taken the place vacated by Judas. We shall not enter at length into that controversy, but it does seem that such a view involves those who hold it in some dubious situations. To say one thing which is not the least, the Holy Spirit was a party to the choice of Matthias, as He fell upon them *all*, imparting the fiery-tongues to each, and they were referred to as “the twelve”. If the ‘eleven’ acted after prayer and fasting, a mistake at that so-critical juncture would have been a very serious flaw in the Church’s constitution at its very birth, and any countenancing of it by the Holy Spirit—to say nothing of endorsing it—would leave a serious question.

Paul said later that a peculiar feature of his apostleship was that he “received it not of man”, and that those who were apostles before him gave him nothing. That would be sheer arrogance if Paul’s apostleship ought to have been by the laying on of hands of the former apostles at Jerusalem. There are plenty of other factors against that view or contention, but we leave them for what is positive. No! Paul stands alone, and for the best of reasons, as we shall see. We are strengthened in this conviction by considering the peculiar nature and measure of the revelation given to Paul.

In his letter to the ‘Ephesians’ (so called), he

says that “by revelation was made known unto me the mystery . . . my understanding of the mystery”. If it is not a precise statement it is a very clear implication that, while Paul is not saying that he is the only one who has come to this knowledge, he is undoubtedly saying that he has a *special* revelation of it; he has come by that knowledge in a special way, by a direct act of God.

The revelation was special in his case, but it was also a manifestation of grace in a special way—“. . . whereof I was made a minister, according to . . . that grace which was given to me”. (iii. 7).

The question naturally arises here as to

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PAUL AND ‘THE TWELVE’

The fact of a difference is difficult to deny. In the majority of things he and ‘the twelve’ were in perfect agreement; e.g., Christ, His Person and work; the teaching, life, death, and resurrection; His exaltation, and coming again. These, and many other things, would find them all on common ground. There would be no difference as to sin, repentance, justification, sanctification, baptism, the Lord’s Table. The same would be true regarding evangelism, Christian fellowship, assemblies of believers, the Gentiles being admitted to the Church,—although in this last matter the attitude of the Jerusalem elders was: Be careful; establish certain safeguards and go carefully.

When all that is granted, it is just there that some feature shows itself which is the cause of some *un*understanding not entirely *mis*understanding; certainly not affecting love, fellowship, and mutual appreciation. Peter will later on refer to “our beloved Paul”, but in the same breath will say of his teaching: “. . . wherein are some things hard to be understood”. There will be those at Corinth who will form a ‘not of Paul’ group and complex, who prefer Peter probably because Paul goes too far. The time will come when Paul will, with a pang, say: “All they which are in Asia turned away from me”. How far are we to allow that statement to take us? ‘All in Asia’—Ephesus, Laodicea, Smyrna, Sardis, Thyatira, Philadelphia, Pergamum, Troas? We know that at least two of his letters had a space left for filling in the name of their destination, and so were ‘circular letters’—(‘Ephesians’ and ‘Colossians’). Did they go round this wider circle? Laodicea is definitely mentioned in ‘Colossians’. Incidentally, may it not be very significant that, not so very many years after Paul had ‘finished his course’, the

risen Lord appeared, mainly with reproach and solemn judgment, among the churches in Asia? Was it in jealousy for that full light and revelation which had constituted them 'lampstands', and because of repudiation, threatened the 'lampstand' with removal and the light with extinction? It is a solemn thought, and if it is true, it brings us very close to the purpose of these meditations.

Thus far we have come only to indicate that Paul, being "a chosen vessel", had deposited in him a revelation of special significance to this dispensation and of which he was—certainly in measure, and largely in kind—different. This takes nothing from the importance and value of other apostles. Not for one moment does it discredit them. They are "the twelve apostles of the Lamb",

ever in great honour and glory, but, in the final summing up, even they may owe an inestimable value to this lone one to whom the glorified Lord broke through on the Damascus Road to 'apprehend' him in relation to "the eternal purpose".

It is not—definitely not—a detracting from John, wonderful and beloved John, with all that we so much cherish through him; neither is it overlooking the great values of the letters bearing Peter's name. Rather is it the *peculiar* and *specific* significance of the vocation of Paul that we are concerned with here.

We cannot overload the chapters of this paper, so we must wait till later to continue with the particular revelation entrusted to Paul—what it was.

“ THE WORD OF MY STEDFASTNESS ”

Reading : John xvi. 32 – xvii. 26 ; Rev. iii. 7 – 13 ; xii. 11 ; vi. 9 ; II Corinthians iii. 2, 3.

IN these days of increasing difficulty and darkness, nothing but an inward knowledge of the Lord Jesus by the Holy Spirit will be adequate to carry us through. That this has been true of believers ever since the beginning, is evident from the reading of this passage in the third chapter of the book of the Revelation. We need not be concerned for the moment with the particular differing interpretations of these letters to the churches, but with their spiritual application. There is no doubt that these letters have had a message for the Lord's people ever since they were written, and this letter—the letter addressed to the church at Philadelphia—has a particular significance for the days in which we live.

The book of the Revelation may be largely a sealed book to many of us, but in days such as these, though we may not understand its details, yet as we just read it, something of confidence and assurance will come stealing into our hearts. Just read it, and, whether you understand its historical application or not, there will come this sense—'All this is very sure, very certain.' Here is not a 'may be', but a 'shall be'. Men write history after the event, but here God has written history before it comes to pass. *How* it will happen we may not know, but it *will* happen. Oh, to get that into our spirits in these days! It is the Word of the Lord. It shall stand.

THE BOOK OF THE REVELATION A . . BOOK OF CONSUMMATIONS

The book of the Revelation is a book of consummations. Though much in it may be hard to understand, yet some things are very clear, and this is clear, that it has pre-eminently to do with the end of things. This is divided into two aspects: the end of two courses, the consummation of two ways. It is the consummation of the way of death and the consummation of the way of life; the inevitable end of the way of Cain, and the inevitable end of the way of the Lord.

THE COURSE

By nature we prefer crises. There *are* crises in the spiritual life, but most of our spiritual life consists of a course—a dogged, persistent course. The end will come not altogether as a sovereign stroke of God, but as the heading up of a way.

We imagine, to take an example, that "they that dwell on the earth"—and this is a significant phrase—will be *suddenly* presented, in a kind of crisis, with an alternative: 'Will you or will you not have the mark of the beast?' But that represents the end of a course. They have been walking in the way of the beast and now they receive the mark of the beast. Something is sealed, something that exists already. It is a consummation. It is the end of a way.

That is very true in the spiritual life. It is a

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course, it is a keeping on, a persisting. Every crisis has its process, and it is in the process, surely, that we are tested out, in the humdrum when there is nothing to stimulate heroism, when we cannot, as it were, bring ourselves up to pitch and say, as we can in a crisis, 'I will take that way, or this'; when there is no stimulus at all and we have got to keep on and keep on.

The original word in our text translated in the English by the word 'patience', (A.S.V. margin: 'stedfastness'), literally means 'to remain behind'. It is variously translated: ". . . the boy Jesus *tarried behind* in Jerusalem" (Luke ii. 43); "Love . . . *endureth* all things" (I Cor. xiii. 7); ". . . having heard the word, keep it, bringing forth fruit with [in] *patience*" (Luke viii. 15). It carries the thought of 'remaining steadfast under pressure when others have gone'.

That is the mark of this end-time—keeping on without anything to stimulate. The statement is: "Thou hast a *little* power". It demands a good deal of power for the heroic, but "thou hast a little power", just a little power. In fact, it looks every moment as though you are going to break down, you are only just holding on.

AN OPEN DOOR

Let us look at another feature of this end-time. "I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." The inference is that every possible means will be brought into effect to close that door. Whatever that divinely-opened door may be, and it may be various things, every force, every power, that the enemy has at his command, he will use in an attempt to close that door which God has opened. It might be thought to be the door of outward, active service—but that door is being shut, and the Lord is allowing the enemy in an ever-increasing way to close it.

Surely it is, above all, an open door of fellowship, an open door of communion between him that has a little power and Him that has all the power. "I have set before thee an open door"—the opened way into His presence. "No man can shut it." The door of outward service may be closed, but that service which in its very essence is fellowship with the Lord in an inward way, that door can never be shut. 'I have opened it, no man can shut it.' But there will be every attempt made to shut the door. Are you not knowing that in your personal life? Oh, the attempts to bring death and to prevent us from having fellowship with the Lord—blanketing, squeezing out of our life to make it impossible to know this fellowship with the Lord!

But, says the risen Lord: "I have set before thee an open door and no man can shut it."

GUARDING THE WORD

"Thou didst keep my word." The word 'keep' there means 'to guard'. "Thou didst guard my word." Now it is not here the thought of standing in a tenacious kind of way for the authority of the Word of God. It is in no sense, I believe, the thought of being a fundamentalist. It is something much more of the heart, something more intimate. The explanation of it is, maybe, to be found in the prayer of the Lord—and how much that prayer contains!—"I have given them thy word" and "they have kept thy word" (John xvii. 14, 6). What does it mean? We need to remember that, in the day when the Lord Jesus prayed this prayer, not a single part of the New Testament had been written. 'I have given them thy word. They have guarded it.' The written Word may be the means, and I believe it is the God-given means, to provide and safeguard that inner word for us, but there is something much more than that. It was the direct, personally-spoken word of the Lord Himself to the heart of His disciples, and oh, how they treasured *that* word!

A WORD TO THE HEART

Just as an illustration of what I mean; you remember that the Lord, when the crowds were going away, turned to His disciples and said, "Would ye also go away?" (John vi. 67). What was it that held the disciples when all the rest were going away? It was His word. Listen as Peter speaks for the rest: "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." What does that mean? Very simply, it means this—"Our eternal life depends upon our guarding the word that You have spoken to us." What that word must have meant! I believe that when Peter was down in the very darkest depths of his spiritual experience, when it seemed as though everything had gone, when he had nothing left seemingly to hold on to, there came to him a word—"I have prayed for thee" (Luke xxii. 31). That written word may mean much to you and me, but it cannot mean anything to us like it meant as spoken to Peter. "I have prayed for thee." Like a drowning man, Peter caught at that. 'The Lord has prayed for me. It looks as though He has ended His life upon a cross. Much that He said I cannot understand; He spoke about things that were so deep; He talked of things to come. But I do know this, that He said,

“ I have prayed for thee ”, and I am holding on to that, I am guarding that word ’.

The word to be guarded is a personal word, spoken into the heart, and I believe these end-days are marked as never before by an assault of the enemy upon the word God has spoken to us. He began his campaign with the subtle question—“ Hath God said . . . ”, and he is ending the campaign with the very same endeavour to discredit God. We need to lay hold upon the Word of God—not merely to be conversant with what the written Word means, but to lay hold by faith upon the word which God has spoken into our hearts.

THE WORD IN THE HEART

I. IN THE LIFE OF DAVID

The Psalmist had a very definite attitude toward the word of the Lord. He said: “ Thy word have I hid in my heart ” (Ps. cxix. 11). I wonder sometimes whether part of our trouble is that we try to pack so much of it in our minds ; striving to understand it, to be efficient in the Word of God. That is not to be despised or neglected, but it is the word that we hide in our *hearts* that counts. “ I have treasured up the words of his mouth more than my necessary food (Job xxiii. 12). “ How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! ” (Ps. cxix. 103). The Word of God is something to feed upon, something to hide in the heart. We may not be prepared to die for a theory, but if we love the Lord so much that we treasure up the word He speaks to us, if every word is precious and treasured and laid up, we may not be prepared to die for the word, but we shall be prepared to die for the Lord who spoke the word. “ They have guarded thy word. ” It is the word in the heart. It is the word that we have really laid hold of by faith.

II. IN THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

Joseph provides us with another example. One phrase may sum up his whole history: “ Until the time that his word came to pass: the word of the Lord tried him ” (Ps. cv. 19). Joseph received the Lord’s word. It was a word that meant nothing to other people. To his brothers it was a matter for jeering and scoffing ; to his father it was a word of misunderstanding—“ Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth? ” (Gen. xxxvii. 10). One can almost hear the old father saying under his breath, ‘ Well, he will grow out of that ’. But

it was not like that to Joseph. It was the Lord’s word (Gen. xlii. 16, 32). He went down into Egypt, but the Lord’s word went with him. He went into circumstances that were calculated to beat everything out of him, but the Lord’s word upheld him. He went down into prison, and the Lord’s word went with him. He went into places where the human verdict would be, ‘ God has forgotten me and man has forgotten me, too ’ ; but the Lord’s word went with him. He held on to the Lord’s word. He had not much strength. Many of us cannot read that history of Joseph without having very sympathetic fellowship with him, when he turned to the butler and said, ‘ When you are taken out, don’t forget me. ’ Yet the butler soon forgot. It seemed as though God had forgotten him too. He had not much strength, but he held on to the word of the Lord, the word He had spoken into his heart, and in the end, the word of God—and Joseph—was vindicated.

In these last days, we shall have nothing else to hold on to but the Lord’s word, the word He has spoken into our hearts. When everything around says that God is not faithful, when the darkness as it deepens says that God has forsaken us, in such a day, oh, to be able to say, “ Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee ” ! The days in which we live are days of increasing darkness, a time when the Devil is seeking to stamp out the Lord’s word. May we be among those to whom the Lord can say, “ Thou didst guard my word ” .

MANIFESTING THE NAME

“ And didst not deny my name ”. We can deny the Lord’s Name without opening our lips. Similarly the displaying of the Name is not exclusively or primarily by the lips. Said the Lord Jesus: “ I manifested thy name unto the men whom thou gavest me . . . ”, and how did He do it? By preaching? The crowds heard His preaching, but they did not really ‘ see ’ the Name. One of those for whom He prayed in Gethsemane wrote many years later, and as he wrote, the remembrance of it all came overwhelmingly upon him: “ We beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father ” (John i. 14). “ I have *manifested* thy name ”—in effect, ‘ I have displayed what Thou art ’. Is it too much to say that the Holy Spirit is seeking to write firstly *within us* what God is so that He can *disclose* it to others? I do not think so. “ Ye are a letter of Christ ” (II Cor. iii. 2, 3), and Christ is the express image of the Father. Men in the world will only come to touch and handle and see the Word of Life as He is resident within His people.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

“A letter of Christ written . . . in tables that are hearts of flesh”; “Ye are our epistle . . . *known and read of all men*”.

Again let me stress that what we *are* matters far more than what we *say*. The “word of their testimony” (Rev. xii. 11) relates to something more than a continual speaking to people and telling them something.

May I give you a little illustration from very recent history? A young fellow in a very difficult business situation came to me not very long ago, and, opening his heart, said, ‘You know, I am very concerned, I don’t feel that I am talking to the men with whom I work as much as I ought to be. My lips seem sealed.’ He went on talking, and in the course of conversation, disclosed that a young man of about twenty-two years of age, after being in the company in which my friend was, came to him and said, ‘I used to be like you are. My father was a minister, and when I was sixteen years of age, something happened and everything in life was different, but I have left it all since then.’ You see the point. This brother was being accused by the adversary, and, if he had listened, he would have been preaching, preaching, preaching; until the folk with whom he was living would have been tired of his preaching. But he had to *live* amongst them, and his life was telling for the Lord. That, I believe, is the word of the testimony—the word implanted in the heart finding expression.

And what is the testimony? It is the testimony of Jesus, and that is the explanation of the Name, “Thy Name”. You remember how jealous God was in the old dispensation for His Name. He desired a place for His Name. It was the sanctuary, and He dwelt in the sanctuary, and there permeated through the camp, even to the surrounding nations, the fact that God dwelt with this people (Ezek. xxxvii. 27, 28). God was in the midst of them. That is the Name, that is the word of the testimony. “I have manifested thy name.” “Thou didst not deny my name.”

Such then are some of the features that mark out the course. The exhortation of the Lord to this people with a little strength, maybe with very little knowledge, who have the word of the Lord and have guarded it, and have not denied His Name—His exhortation is, Hold fast! That is the exhortation for these days. Hold fast! We cannot do very much, but the Lord says, Hold fast! Your salvation and mine in these days is not in gathering together information. Our salvation is in holding fast upon the Lord through His Word.

THE CONSUMMATION

The consummation is a very blessed one. It is, “I will make him a pillar in the house of my God.” A pillar in a building is that which takes the weight. In a large building the pillars are they which carry the whole superstructure. If the pillars give way there is not much hope for the building. “I will make him a pillar.” God says, ‘The overcomer, he that comes to My end, shall be one upon whom I will put weight in My house’. These days through which we are passing are days when the pillars are being tested. It would not do for *them* to break down in that day. There is to be no breakdown in the sanctuary when it is finished, nothing that offends, nothing at all. It will be the final fulfilment of the Word of the Lord: “This is the law of the house . . . the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy” (Ezek. xliii. 12). The glory of the Lord will fill the house and the pillars will be those that have been tested to the full and have been through a process in which their weaknesses have been eliminated and there is no weakness now. They bear the weight, they carry the responsibility. “I will make him a pillar.”

“I will write upon him the name of my God”. When you write a letter you sign your name at the end of it. God says, ‘When I have finished writing My epistle, I will put My signature to it for all the universe to see, and will say, “This is My writing, I did this by My Spirit.”’

“I CAN . . . THROUGH CHRIST”

One very brief word remains to be spoken, lest the impression be left that all depends upon *our* holding on. The exhortation is—Hold fast! There may be some who are saying, ‘I cannot hold on any longer. My fingers are weakening, my grasp is slackening. I am in danger of letting go, and it is not in me to hold on’. Of course it is not in you to hold on, it is not in me. When the pillars are finished in the house of God, their adornment and their strength will be the Lord’s own nature. The two pillars in Solomon’s temple were crowned with pomegranates and lily-work, speaking of the life ministered to us through the intercession of our great High-Priest, and because of our utter dependence upon Him. The name of the first was ‘Jachin’ which means ‘He will establish’, and the name of the second was ‘Boaz’, which means “In it is strength”.

You cannot hold on? Of course you cannot!

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Let us look at Joseph again for a moment. He stands pre-eminently, not for the elimination of what we are by nature (Jacob typifies that), but for the development and cultivation of the life of God within. The testing, the trying, all this pressure, is not to change you and me into Christ. That can never be. But all the testing and the trying is to eliminate first, by the Cross, that which can never stand the stress and which must be for ever failure to the Lord, and then to develop that which is Christ within us. That is the spiritual life—Christ in us in all His fulness.

“I will make him a pillar.” “I will write upon him the name of my God.” *He* is going to do it. All the striving will never bring that end about, but *He will do it*. The great majority of us would say, ‘If it all depends on me, then it is a bad lookout!’ Well, of course, that is true, but let us look again at the blessing of Joseph—“The arms of his hands were made strong, by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob . . . even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee” (Gen. xlix. 24, 25). Do you get the thought? ‘Lord, I cannot hold on any longer; my grasp is failing; my fingers are weakened; I shall fall.’ It is the cry of the child, and the father comes behind with strong hands, and takes hold of

the arms of the child, and takes the weight. He can hold on then! He will put His arms around us, and He will take hold of our puny little arms, and He will close His strong hands upon our arms. Then you and I will hold fast. No one upon earth or in hell can weaken such a grasp. “I cannot”, says Paul. Yes, but “I can . . . *through Christ which strengtheneth me*”! Your hope and mine is in Christ who dwells within us. Though everything deny it, He is there. If we are truly His, He is there.

Towards the end of the Lord’s prayer to the Father, we have the expression of His heart desire, in the words: “Father, I desire that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am”—‘Father, I do want my own to be very near to me’! And He will take us through. “I come quickly: hold fast” (Rev. iii. 11). To His own that is a promise, not a threat. Hold on, I am coming, I come quickly! “Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. He that overcometh . . .”—“and they overcame because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not their life even unto death”.

It is all in Him, and in Him alone.

C. O.

THE SERVICE OF GOD

“To serve the living . . . God” (1 Thess. i. 9)

I. THE SERVICE — WHAT IT IS

IF the service of God is to be as immediately and fully fruitful and effectual as it can be it is essential that we should have its nature clearly defined. If asked what the service of God is, many different answers would be given. Christianity has—on its practical side—been resolved into certain particular lines and forms of work, with their peculiar objects governing. Because the conception of Christian service has become so large and general it has become necessary to reconsider the matter and ask—What is really the Divine object in the service of God?

(a) THE OBJECT

If we look carefully at the Bible as a whole with this question before us, we shall see that there is but one all-inclusive and all-governing answer. The work of God may move along many and vari-

ous lines and have different aspects but the object is one. This one object determines whether the work is really the work of God, and also determines the measure of permanence and eternal value of what is done in the Name of the Lord. Even with the best intention of doing God service, there is very much that misses the mark and fails of the Divine object.

The one object is Christ. God has, all-inclusively, committed Himself to fill His Son with all things, and to fill all things with His Son. To bring Christ in, and to increase the measure of Christ, both extensively and intensively, is God’s sole object, and co-operation with Him in this is the only true service of God. That “*he may fill all things*”; that “*in all things he might have the preeminence*”; that “*Christ (may be) all, and in all*”, is the only service which answers to God’s heart. This is a statement of fact, and it is also a test of work. In the Old Testament, everything points to Christ, and He is implicit in all things there. The significance

WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

f Christ governs all. In the New Testament this is explicit. Conversions are not ends and objects in themselves. Every new believer is a vessel of Christ. The fact in every "new birth" is that Christ has come in. But the Scriptures do not leave it there. The greater part of the New Testament is occupied with the increase of Christ in believers. That is the personal aspect. Beyond this the Church as a whole is brought into view as that which is to be "*the fulness of him*". Then local churches are represented as vessels and vehicles of Christ beyond individual possibility and capacity. The whole idea of the Holy Spirit is to make the fulness of Christ a reality. All the conflict is related to this, for the Adversary knows that his kingdom is weakened and narrowed in proportion to the increase of Christ. The test of all Christian work will be its effectiveness in really enlarging the measure of Christ in this universe.

(b) ITS NATURE

In this dispensation Christ is not on this earth physically, but is only here in and by His Spirit. Christ cannot, therefore, be known in any other way than spiritually. Further: Christ is not, in this dispensation, seeking to set up something on this earth as attached to it. He is detaching a people from the world and the nations, and attaching them to Himself in an entirely spiritual way. Their birth is spiritual—John iii. 6. Their sustenance is spiritual—John vi. 33. Their knowledge of God and of His things is spiritual—I Cor. ii. 9 - 16. Their consummation is spiritual—I Cor. xv. 35 - 38. Everything is now a matter of spiritual measure and value.

So the service of God in this age is essentially spiritual. Not what can be seen, counted, or in any way appraised by the natural senses; but what is the pure and alone work of the Spirit of God is the criterion.

The trend of things since Apostolic times has almost entirely been to set up a world-system of Christianity; a Church that is something of temporal account and position. The immediate result of touching this cursed earth is discord and division. Only a Church on heavenly ground is the "*one body*" (see *Ephesians i and iv*). As is the Church of "*the eternal purpose*", so is its ministry, spiritual and heavenly; not 'ecclesiastical', formal, and ritualistic.

II. THE SERVANT

If the work of God is essentially spiritual, then it demands spiritual people for its doing; and the

measure of their spirituality will determine the measure of their value to the Lord. Because this is so, in God's mind the servant is more than the work. If we are going to come truly into the hands of God for His purpose, then we shall be dealt with by Him in such a way as to continually increase our spiritual measure. Not our interest in Christian work; our enthusiasms, ambitions, energies, or abilities; not our academic qualifications, or anything that we are in ourselves, but simply our spiritual life is the basis of the beginning and growth of our service to God. Even the work, when we are in it, is used by Him to increase our spiritual measure. Any Christian work which does not have the effect of adding to the measure of Christ in the worker is either not the true Divine service, or is itself working to his or her condemnation and injury. The Apostle Paul is a great example of how much increase of true spiritual knowledge and Christly measure is resultant from the very service of God itself, when the servant is a truly spiritual man. There are numerous other instances of this, both in and out of the Bible.

The Apostle's word "*not a novice*" (*1 Tim. iii. 6*) as to "*overseers*" would—if applied to all taking responsibility in the things of God—correct much that is weak and painful in organized Christian work. The lack of an essential measure of maturity has resulted in tragedy in many lives under strain, and many defeats in the work. Too often the devil has either weakened or destroyed the work and the worker by making the activities too heavy and exacting for the spiritual life to measure up. It is not truths stated, ideas set forth, doctrines preached, etc.; but the spiritual life, power, and measure behind it all that settles its real value and fruitfulness.

Again, because this is true, there is no end to spiritual growth in this life. We are really only getting to a position to be of some value, because of experience and understanding, when we are taken away. This would make life an enigma and something of a mockery were it not that the greater measure and nature of our service was to be afterward when and where "*his servants shall serve him. And they shall see his face*".

There is a dangerous tendency to commit the interests of God to the hands of those who do not really know Him in a deep way, and to regard those who have measure through much experience as incapable of meeting the needs of the younger generation. The New Testament would soundly trounce this superficial tendency as a peril to the Church or God. Years may not be the criterion, either

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way, but spiritual degree most certainly is !

III. THE TRAINING

Because what we have said about the servant and the service is so true, the training must be above all things that which will produce spiritual men and women. Of course we recognize that this applies to all children of God who would serve Him in any way ; but we are now having in mind such as may serve Him in more than a general way.

a. It is essential that there is a strong and sound grounding in the knowledge of the Scriptures. For every obvious reason this is so. But when we have given this matter all the place that it must have, it is necessary to point out that the letter of the Word is not enough. Lectures on the Bible, and analyses of its books will never make a true servant of Christ. The need is for a *spiritual* knowledge of the Word of God ; it must be spiritually taught and apprehended. That which lies behind the letter as to the Divine mind must be seen. The teaching and study of the Scriptures must have immediate spiritual effect in the life of those concerned. The Word of God will only profit in so far as it comes to us in spiritual power.

b. There must be a practical life running side by side with the study work. This practical side should have two aspects at least.

1. There must be life as in a spiritual family, so that all the lessons of forbearance, patience, and co-operation are learned. The Cross must be known in the numerous and frequent occasions when the flesh in ourselves and in others rises because of human failures and faults. The great value of fellowship has to be learned in the testing conditions of life at close quarters over a sufficient period. The reality of the laws of "the body of Christ" has to be established. Dependence, interdependence, inter-relatedness, as over against independence, individualism, and detachment, are some of these laws which will mean in their observance or violation life or death, fulness or limitation in the Lord's service. Our object must not be

to get adherents to Christianity, but to build a spiritual "body", therefore we must know 'body' life, order, and function.

2. There must be practical spiritual expression in our training, and the best and most directly fruitful way for this assembly life. The training of 'workers' should be in close relationship with 'church' life as constituted and formed on the true organic basis of the Body of Christ. Not just a preaching place, or one where meetings are held and attended ; but where there is true corporate life and mutuality in building up. In such, and out from such corporate life, ministry and service should be developed ; not just technicians from an institute. No one should really be allowed to go out into whole time Christian service who has not had a true 'church' training and learnt the meaning and value of corporate life. God is not wanting so many units, either for salvation or service. He is set upon His Church as the corporate expression of Christ. Everything, therefore, if fulness is to be attained, must be on that basis.

To sum up. God is working in relation to His eternal purpose concerning His Son, Jesus Christ. The Church which is His (Christ's) Body is the predestined "fulness of him". This personal and corporate expression of Christ is not earthly, temporal, 'ecclesiastical' ; not national, or sectarian, but heavenly, spiritual, eternal. The ministry of *this* corporate representation of Christ is essentially and solely a spiritual thing, determined by its spiritual measure. (Spirituality is what is of God and not of man—even religious man.) While there are those things which are of value in furnishing the Lord's servants for the human aspects of their work, the real training is spiritual, i.e., the knowledge of God vitally, and of His Son, in the Word of God and in experience. Training for the service of God should therefore be solely governed by the object of producing men and women of a sound and strong spiritual life, with a background of a deep knowledge of Him, "the word of God" dwelling in them "richly in all wisdom and spiritual understanding".

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

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EASTER SPECIAL MEETINGS

at HONOR OAK

(IF THE LORD WILLS)

FRIDAY, APRIL 20, at 11 a.m., 3. 30 & 6. 30 p.m.

SATURDAY, APRIL 21, at 3. 30 & 6. 30 p.m.

MONDAY, APRIL 23, at 11 a.m., 3. 30 & 6. 30 p.m.

SWITZERLAND AESCHI, BERNESE OBERLAND

7th. (evening) to 17th. (morning) SEPTEMBER

The Lord willing, we hope to have a further conference in Switzerland this year. The ministry of the Word will be in English, but for the help of those who do not understand English, there will be interpretation into German and into French, as necessary. Accommodation is limited and each year there is a growing demand so that we shall be greatly helped if friends wishing to attend will make an early application.

FULL PARTICULARS FROM:—

THE CONFERENCE SECRETARY,

39, HONOR OAK ROAD,

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HORIZONED BY CHRIST

CHAPTER FIVE

Reading : Ps. lxxxix. 19 – 20 ; Acts xiii. 22 ; Heb. i. 9 ; I Sam. xiii. 14.

THE Bible abounds with men. It abounds with many other things ; with doctrine, with principles ; but more than anything else it abounds with men. That is God's method, His chosen method, His primary method of making Himself known. These men who were in relationship with God, with whom God was associated, bring distinctive features into view. Not in any one man is the whole man acceptable and every feature to be praised, but in every man there are one or more features that stand out and distinguish him from all others, and abide as the conspicuous features of that man's life. Those outstanding distinctive features represent God's thought, the features which God Himself has taken pains to develop, for which God laid His hand upon such men, that throughout history they should be the expression of certain particular traits.

Thus we speak of Abraham's faith, of the meekness of Moses. Every man is representative of some feature wrought into him, developed in him, and

when you think of the man the feature is always uppermost in your mind. Our attention is drawn, not to the man as a whole, but to that which marks him in particular. So by one apostle we are called to recollect the faith of Abraham, while another will bid us remember the patience of Job. These features are God's thoughts, and when all the features of all the men are gathered up and combined, they represent Christ. It is as though God had scattered one Man over the generations, and in a multitude of men under His hand had shown some aspect, some feature, some facet of that one Man, and that one Man is able to say, "Ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life ; and these are they which bear witness of me . . ." (John v. 39). There is a Man spread over the Bible, and all who have come under God's hand, have been apprehended for the purpose of showing something of His thought, which in its fulness is expressed in His Son, the Lord Jesus. Recognizing that, we are better able to appreciate the words we have just read, which in the first instance related to David, but are clearly seen to reach beyond to a greater than David. Read

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

again Ps. lxxxix and you cannot fail to see that two things merge into one another: "I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people". You have to look for a greater than David for the complete expression of that. In the words "I have laid help upon one that is mighty . . ." we have one of the great foundations of our redemption. A greater than David is here. David in those principal features of his life under God's hand was an expression of God's thought concerning Christ. You cannot carry the statement, "I have found . . . a man after my heart . . ." through the whole of David's life, and say that when David was guilty of this and that particular thing which marred his life this was after God's heart. We have to see exactly what it was, in and about David, which made it possible for God to say that he was a man after His own heart. It was just that which indicated Christ, pointed to Christ. It is only that which is Christ which is after God's heart.

THE DIVINE PURPOSE FROM ETERNITY

"The Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart . . ." (I Sam. xiii. 14). Remembering our previous meditations, we shall find a large setting for a statement like that. It speaks of the creation of man, of the Lord seeking to have a man-race, a corporate man in whom His own thoughts and features are reproduced in a moral way. The Lord has ever sought Him that man. It was the seeking of such a man that led to the creation. It was the seeking of such a man that led to the Incarnation. It is that seeking of a man which has led to the Church, the "one new man". God is all the time in quest of a man to fill His universe; not one man as a unity, but a collective man gathered up into His Son. Paul speaks of this man as ". . . the church, which is his body, the fulness of him . . ." (Eph. i. 22, 23). That is the fulness, the measure of the stature of a man in Christ. It is the Church which is there spoken of, not any one individual. God has ever been in quest of a man to fill His universe.

THE LIKENESS IS MORAL AND SPIRITUAL

God thinks thoughts, desires, and wills a will, and those thoughts, and desires, and that will are the very essence of His moral being, and when He has thus reproduced Himself in this sense, He has a being constituted according to His own moral nature; the man becomes an embodi-

ment and personification of the very moral nature of God; not of the Deity of God, but of His moral nature. You know what it is in life to say that anything or anyone is after your own heart. You mean they are just exactly what you think they are and what you want them to be for your own complete satisfaction. The man after God's heart is like that to Him.

DEVOTED TO THE WILL OF GOD

There is a third thing which defines that to some degree, which puts its finger upon the root of the matter. What is the man after God's heart? What is it that God has sought in man? The verse in Acts tells us: ". . . who shall do all my will" (Acts xiii. 22). If you look at the margin you will see that 'will' is plural: ". . . all my wills"—everything that God desires, everything that God wills, the will of God in all its forms, in all its ways, in all its quests and objectives. The man who will do all His wills is the man after God's heart, whom God has sought. The words are spoken, in the first place, of David. There are several ways in which David as a man after God's heart is brought out into clear relief.

Firstly, David is set in striking contrast with Saul. When God had deposed and set aside Saul, He raised up David. Those two stand opposite to one another and can never occupy the throne together. If David is to come, then Saul must go. If Saul is there, David cannot come. That is seen very clearly in the history, but let us note that in this we are confronted with basic principles, not merely with what is historic and to do with persons of bygone days. Before God there are two moral states, two spiritual conditions; two hearts, and these two hearts can never be in the throne together, can never occupy the princely position at the same time. If one is to be prince, or in the place of ascendancy, of honour, of God's appointment, the other heart has to be completely put away. It is remarkable that even after David was anointed king there was a considerable lapse of time before he came to the throne, during which Saul continued to occupy that position. David had to keep back until that régime had run its course, until it was completely exhausted, finished, and then put aside.

It would be a long, though profitable, study, to go over Saul's life as shown by his outward behaviour. Saul was governed by his own judgments in the things of God. That is one thing. When God commanded Saul to slay Amalek—man, woman,

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beast, and child ; to destroy Amalek root and branch, it was a big test of Saul's faith in God's judgment, God's wisdom, God's knowing of what He was doing, God's honour. If God commands us to do something which on the face of it would seem to deny something in God's own nature of kindness, and goodness, and mercy, and we begin to allow our own judgment to take hold upon God's command and to give another complexion to the matter, to take obedience out of our hearts, we have set our judgment against God's command. In effect we have said: 'The Lord surely does not know what He is doing! Surely the Lord is not alive to the way His reputation will suffer if this is done, the way people will speak of His very morality!' It is a dangerous thing to bring our own moral judgment to bear upon an explicit command of the Lord. Saul's responsibility was not to question why, but to obey. We recall Samuel's word to Saul: "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (I Sam. xv. 22). The man after God's heart does all His wills, and does not say: 'Lord, this will bring You into reproach! This will bring You into dishonour! This will raise serious difficulties for You!' On the contrary, he replies at once: 'Lord, You have said this ; I leave the responsibility for the consequences with You, and obey.' The Lord Jesus always acted so. He was misunderstood for it, but He did it.

Saul was influenced in his conduct by his own feelings, his own likes and dislikes, and preferences. He blamed the people, it is true, but it was he himself who was at fault after all. It was his judgment working through his sentiments. In effect he said: 'It is a great pity to destroy that! Here is something that looks so good, that according to all standards of sound judgment is good, and the Lord says destroy! What a pity! Why not give it to God in sacrifice?' Now we know that it is true of the natural man that there are these two aspects, a good side and a bad. Are we not, on our part, often found saying, in effect: 'Let us hand the good to God!' We are quite prepared for the very sinful side to go, but let us give the good that is in us to the Lord! *All* our righteousnesses are in His sight as filthy rags. God's new creation is not a patchwork of the old ; it is an entirely new thing, and the old has to go. Saul defaulted upon that very thing. He reasoned that the best should be given to God, when God had said: "Utterly destroy."

The man after God's own heart does not make blunders like that. His interrogation of himself is :

What has the Lord said? No place is given to any other enquiry—What do I feel about it? How does it seem to me? He does not say: 'It is a great pity from my standpoint'. No! The Lord has said it, and that is enough. God has sought Him a man who will do all His wills.

So we could pursue the contrast between Saul and David along many lines. We are led to one issue every time. It all points in one direction. Will this man surrender his own judgments, his own feelings, his own standards, his entire being to the will of God, or will he have reservations because of the way in which *he* views things and questions God?

AN UTTER REJECTION OF THE FLESH

There is another way in which David stands out as the man after God's own heart, and it is this with which we are especially concerned, and with which we will conclude this part of our meditation. It is that which is to be noted in the first public action of David in the valley of Elah. We refer, of course, to his contest with Goliath. This first public action of David was a representative and inclusive one, just as the conquest of Jericho was with Israel. Jericho, as we know, was representative and inclusive of the conquest of the whole land. There were seven nations to be deposed. They marched round Jericho seven times. Jericho, in spiritual and moral principle, was the embodiment of the whole land. God intended that what was true of Jericho should be true of every other conquest, that the basis should be one of sheer faith ; victory through faith, possession through faith.

David's contest with Goliath was like that. It gathered up in a full way everything that David's life was to express. It was the comprehensive disclosure or unveiling of the heart of David. He was a man after God's own heart. God's ground of approval in His choice of men is shown to us in His words to Samuel with reference to another of Jesse's sons: "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature . . . the Lord looketh on the heart" (I Sam. xvi. 7). In the case of David, the heart that God had seen is disclosed in the contest with Goliath, and it was that heart which made David the *man* after God's own heart all the rest of his life. What is Goliath? Who is he? He is a gigantic figure behind whom all the Philistines hide. He is a comprehensive one, an inclusive one ; in effect, the whole Philistine force ; for when they saw their champion was dead they fled. The nation is bound up with, and represented by, the man.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

What are the Philistines typically? They represent that which is very near to what is of God, always in close proximity, always seeking to impinge upon the things of God ; to get a grip, to look into, to pry, to discover the secret things of God. You will recall their attitude toward the Ark when it came into their hands. They were ever seeking to pry into the secrets of God, but always in a natural way. They are called "uncircumcised". That is what David said about Goliath: "this uncircumcised Philistine". We know from Paul's interpretation that typically that means the uncrucified natural life, the natural life which is always seeking to get a grip on the things of God apart from the work of the Cross ; which does not recognize the Cross ; which sets the Cross aside, and thinks that it can proceed without the Cross into the things of God ; which ignores the fact that there is no way into the things of the Spirit of God except through the Cross as an experienced thing, as a power breaking down the natural life and opening a way for the Spirit. There is no possibility whatever of our knowing the secrets of God except by the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit "was not" (we use the word in the particular meaning of John vii. 39) until Calvary was accomplished. That must be personal in application, not merely historic. The uncircumcised Philistines simply speak of a natural life which comes alongside the things of God, and is always interfering with them, touching them, looking into them, wanting to get hold of them ; a menace to that which is spiritual. Goliath embodies all that. All the Philistines are gathered up into him. David meets him, and the issue, in spiritual interpretation, is this, that David's heart is going to have nothing of that. He sets himself that all things shall be of God, and nothing of man. There shall be no place for nature here in the things of God, but this natural strength must be destroyed. The Philistines become David's lifelong enemies, and he theirs.

Do you see the man after God's heart? Who is he? What is he? He is a man who, though the odds against him be tremendous, sets himself with all his being against that which interferes with the things of God in an 'uncircumcised' way. That which contradicts the Cross of the Lord Jesus, that which seeks to force its way into the realm of God other than by the gate-way of the Cross is represented by the Philistine. Who is this uncircumcised Philistine? David's heart was roused with a mighty indignation against all that was represented by this man.

That constitutes a very big issue indeed. It has

not to do merely with a sinful world. There is that in the world which is opposed to God, positively set against God, a sinful state that is recognized and acknowledged by most people. That is all against God, but that is not what we have here. This is something else that is to be found even amongst the Lord's people, and which regards nothing as too sacred to be exploited. It will get into an assembly of saints in Corinth and call forth a tremendous letter of the Apostle about natural wisdom, the wisdom of this world expressing itself as the mentality even of believers, and thus making the Gospel of none effect. This spirit that is not subject to the Cross creeps in and associates itself with the things of God, and takes a purchase upon them. It is not so much that which is blatantly, obviously, and conspicuously sinful, as the natural life which is accounted so fine according to human standards. The Lord's people have always had to meet that in one form or another. Ezra had to meet it. Men came and proffered their help to build the House of God: and how the Church has succumbed to that sort of thing! If anybody offers their help for the work of the Lord, the attitude at once taken is: Oh, well, it is help, which is what we want ; let us have all the help we can get! There is no discrimination. Nehemiah had to meet it. There is some help that we are better without. The Church is far better without Philistine association. That is the sort of thing that has assailed the Church all the way through. John, the last surviving Apostle, in his old age writes: "... but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence . . . receiveth us not . . ." (III John 9). You see the significance of that. John was the man of the testimony of Jesus: "I John . . . was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus". The great word of John's writings is 'life': (John i. 4); "... this life is in his Son" (I John v. 11). Diotrephes could not bear with that. If Christ is coming in, Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence, must go out ; if he that loveth to have the pre-eminence is coming in, then Christ is kept out.

The man after God's own heart is the man who will have no compromise with the natural mind ; not only with what is called sin in its more positive forms, but with all that natural life which tries to get hold of the work of God and the interests of God, to handle and to govern them. This has been the thing that has crippled and paralysed the Church through the centuries ; men insinuating themselves into the place of God in His Church.

You see what David stands for. He will take the

head off that giant. There has to be no compromise with this thing ; it must go down in the name of the Lord.

THE PRICE OF LOYALTY

Now notice this, that for his devotion David had to suffer. This man, who alone saw the significance of that with which he had to do, this man who alone had the thoughts of God in his heart, the conceptions of God, the feelings of God, the insight of God ; this man who alone with Samuel amongst all the people of Israel in that dark day of spiritual weakness and declension was on the side of God, seeing things in a true way, has to suffer for it. As he came upon the scene, and, with his perception and insight into what was at stake betraying itself in his indignation, his wrath, his zeal for the Lord, began to challenge this thing, his own brethren turned upon him. How? In the cruellest way for any such man, the way most calculated to take the heart out of any true servant of God. They imputed wrong motives. They said in effect : You are trying to make a way for yourself ; trying to get recognition for yourself ; trying to be conspicuous ! You are prompted by personal interests, personal ambitions ! That is a cruel blow. Every man who has come out against that which has

usurped God's place in any way, and stood alone for God against the forces that prevail, has come under that lash. To Nehemiah it was said : ' You are trying to make a name for yourself, to get prophets to set you on high and proclaim through the country that there is a great man called Nehemiah in Jerusalem ! ' Similar things were said of Paul. Misrepresentation is a part of the price. David's heart was as free from any such thing as any heart could be. He was set upon the Lord, the Lord's glory, the Lord's satisfaction, but even so, men will say : ' It is all for himself, his own name, his own reputation, his own position. ' That is more calculated to take the heart out of a man than a good deal of open opposition. If only they would come out and fight fairly and squarely in the open ! But David did not succumb ; the giant did ! May the Lord give us a heart like David's, for that is a heart like His own.

We see in David a reflection of the Lord Jesus, who was eaten up by zeal for the Lord's House, who paid the price for His zeal, and who was, in a sense above all others, the Man after God's own heart.

It has not been our intention to make this a study of the life of David, but just to show how the Horizon of Christ reaches backward as well as forward in all God's thoughts.

(to be continued)

THE ROYAL LINE

Reading : Matthew i. 1 - 16.

" For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts " (Isaiah lv. 8 - 9).

THE readers who open their New Testament with a desire to get straight on with the Gospel story may feel that Matthew has wasted his space and kept them waiting unnecessarily by the insertion of these first sixteen verses of his book. As we come to know more of the wonders of God's Word, however, and to enquire of the Spirit as to His meaning of things, we find that some of the most precious features of the Gospel of Christ are enshrined in this unpromising genealogical record. Four such features seem very plain, and they can be described as marvels of God's beginnings, of His grace, of His recoveries, and of His providential wisdom.

WHERE GOD BEGINS

We notice that this ancestral account begins with Abraham : not with Adam—to prove His humanity (this is done in Luke), and not with David—to prove His royalty (though this is included), but with Abraham. Some may think that this was because Abraham was a man of God, a spiritual giant, an almost unique servant of the Most High. It is true that such he was, and much more, but this is not the reason for his being chosen as a starting-point in Matthew's record.

Let us imagine that in his ninety-ninth year, Abraham could have been given a preview of these opening verses. How absurd, how sadly absurd, it would all have seemed. At seventy-five he still had a hope that his seed and Sarah's might extend over the centuries and serve God's purposes. At eighty-six he was finally convinced that this was no longer possible. At ninety-nine he was so certain of the impossibility that this could

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ever be that he actually laughed at God when the idea was again presented to him.

He had given up. To him the limits of God's capabilities seemed to have been passed. So far as he was concerned, and the same was true of Sarah, they could supply God with no hope for the realization of His plans. This—strangely enough—is how God intends it to be. He does not need man's assistance. He will not accept it. Abraham is to us the symbol of God's omnipotence, operating when man has nothing to contribute. The Gospel begins where man's expectations and energies end. This choice of Abraham as a starting-point is full of significance.

Matthew himself must have fully agreed with it, for he too was the most unlikely of all the twelve to be called into the Divine plan for the glory of Christ. He seems to emphasize the point by describing himself as "Matthew the publican" (Matt. x. 3). Two other evangelists tell the story of his call, but are content to name him as Levi. They were too kindly and considerate to disclose that this Levi was one and the same with Matthew, the apostle. Matthew himself, however, made no secret of the fact, for he saw it as Christ's greatest glory that He could work with such hopeless material as himself. Human hopelessness is no problem to God. He can only begin His works of power when our attempts at self-righteousness have come to an end.

TRIUMPHS OF GRACE

In his presentation of the genealogy of Christ, Matthew was constrained by the Holy Spirit to include four women in the list. Knowing this, we might well imagine that these were the outstanding wives, the great women of the Bible, but if we do reasoned we should soon discover how different are God's thoughts from ours. Ruth is the only one of the four who could possibly figure in such a list of famous women. Sarah, Rebekah and the others are quite ignored. For his purposes Matthew chose to draw our attention to some who were not only unlikely but quite unworthy. Ruth, it is true, was a noble character, but in her case the fact that she was a Moabitess was enough to exclude her from any hope of sharing in the life of God's people. Yet she did share it, for God's grace is so remarkable that it not only set aside the Divine prohibition, but actually brought her into the main stream of the royal line.

But look at the first name on the list, Tamar, whose unsavoury story is told in Genesis xxxviii.

This is a page of history which we might feel that we could well do without. Judah was an honoured name, and his family was chosen to be the one from which the royal line should emerge, but here we see Judah at his worst. While it may be true that he was more to blame than Tamar, we still feel that the whole sordid story of her actions would be best forgotten. It is with nothing less than amazement to find not only that it is recorded but that God actually made use of this woman to pursue His purposes in Christ. God is so great that He can afford to expose the weaknesses and failings of His instruments, so that the supremacy of His power can be demonstrated. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound". That is surely the conclusion which Tamar's story brings to us, and coming to it how can we but worship God afresh, and find new hope in His great mercy?

The next name may seem even more surprising. "Salmon begat Boaz of Rahab" (v. 5). There is nothing to be said in favour of Rahab, unless it be that she had faith. Yet this, according to the New Testament, is the one quality which matters, and it was that which distinguished her from the many who perished. James adds that hers was a working faith, not because her works were an addition to her faith, but only to remind us that true faith always does produce action. Excluded from all hope of fellowship with God's people both by her birth (for she belonged to Jericho, the accursed city) and by her behaviour (for both the Hebrew letter and James describe her as "Rahab the harlot"), she nevertheless found grace in God's eyes because she cast herself on His mercy and trusted in Him.

The very fact that she was spared was a marvel. The fact that God was able to give her such a future and incorporate her into the main stream of His purpose with an honoured place in the royal line is even more marvellous. No wonder Paul speaks of "the exceeding riches of his grace" (Ephesians ii. 7), for every true believer is a spiritual counterpart of Rahab.

Matthew would enjoy being told to put her name in the list. Was he not one of those despised publicans who were always being classed either with 'sinners' or with 'harlots'? Grace had visited him too. He, also, had found deliverance and forgiveness by faith in Christ. And what is more, he found the grace of God so good and so effective that it was able to give even him a place of honour in the kingdom of God. Just as God does not need our help, so He does not accept our righteousness.

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He can only find a place in His purposes for those who no longer trust in their own efforts or their own merits.

The fourth woman introduced in this list is not named, but simply described as "her that had been the wife of Uriah" (v. 6). No reader of the Old Testament needs to be reminded that in this choice God shows how strange are His ways and how mysterious to us His thoughts. David had a number of wives, one of whom at least, Abigail, was a woman of real spiritual character. He had also a number of sons. Yet the Lord turned from all these others to choose Solomon. He gave a hint of this choice immediately the child was born, sending His special messenger, Nathan, to declare that the boy was specially beloved.

None of us can measure the enormity of David's sin. We must never make light of it, for God did not do so, and nor did David when once his conscience was aroused. But equally we can never limit the extent of Divine forgiveness, and must not try to do so. If sin is confessed, if the heart is truly humbled before God, if the matter is clearly faced and forgiveness received on the basis of God's own Word, then God's purpose can go on, even with such a sinner. Else how is it that this woman and this marriage can not only be tolerated by God but drawn into His Divine scheme of salvation?

These, then, are the four women whom Matthew was instructed to include in his list. Other wives and mothers played an equally privileged part. Perhaps there was no need to mention them. These four, though, point to the universality of God's goodness and of His greatness. The God of Abraham was also the God of Rahab and of Ruth. And He is our God.

GOD'S MIRACULOUS RECOVERIES

In the third place we have a double mention of king Jechoniah, also called Jehoiachin and Coniah. For some reason Matthew divides his list into three parts, each of fourteen generations. The first of these ends with David, which seems reasonable, since his reign was virtually the climax of God's earthly kingdom. The next fourteen generations bring us to Jeconiah (v. 11), whose downfall preceded the end of that kingdom: "And Josiah begat Jechoniah and his brethren, at the time of the carrying away to Babylon". This brings to mind the lowest depths to which the royal line could sink, suggesting that apart from a miracle there could be no further future for this family.

Jeremiah's prophecies abundantly confirm this gloomy verdict. "As I live, saith the Lord, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were a signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence . . ." (Jer. xxii. 24). The story of his fall and captivity are given in II Kings xxiv. 8 - 16. The only thing that was spared was his life. Otherwise he lost all and suffered every indignity, being shut up in a Babylonish prison where for thirty-seven years he wore prison clothes and ate prison food (II Kings xxv. 27 - 29). This, of course, was his own fault, and represented his share in the guilt of his people.

In the case of Abraham we have seen that human powerlessness cannot hinder the Divine purpose. In the case of the Gentile women we have seen that human unworthiness can also be overcome by the power of God's grace. But in the case of king Jehoiachin we are confronted by an even more serious hindrance to the plans of God. His own people had failed Him. They had behaved so badly that He Himself had been forced to disown them and to expose them to the full force of judgment on their sins. What, we might well ask, what can even God do now?

The further verse of Matthew i gives us the answer. With a brief pause the apostle takes up the story as though nothing had happened. "And after the carrying away to Babylon, Jeconiah begat Shealtiel . . ." (v. 12). Here is indeed a miracle of recovery. Here is a thrilling reminder that the Lord cannot be defeated, and that whoever falls out by the way, He goes marching on. Thirty-seven years in prison was a very long time. Yet at the end of it, God gave evidence that His hand was still on affairs, for Jechoniah was freed from prison, reinstated in some royal dignity, and even given precedence over all the other captive kings. We are given no indication that Jechoniah deserved this, the emphasis being all on the faithfulness of God. However deep the fall, there is always a possibility of recovery. The Lord will not suffer His faithfulness to fail.

We must not think that Jeremiah's prophecies were at fault, although at first sight this may seem to be the case. "Write this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah" (Jer. xxii. 30). This does not mean that Jechoniah was literally childless. We know that he was not. What it does mean, though, is that no descendant of his should ever be an enthroned king. This is still perfectly true, for the genealogy we are now con-

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sidering was not that of Mary, but of Joseph. Christ was not born of Joseph. While being considered officially and by inference a descendant of Joseph's line, he had no real connection with that branch of David's family. Mary, the human mother of Jesus, came through another branch of the family, as can be seen in Luke iii. 23-38. Although this is true, and the prophetic word accurately fulfilled, we are still left in wonder at the goodness of God's grace which could recover a name which had plumbed the depths of disgrace and give it a place in Matthew's record.

God's recoveries are miracles. Matthew proved this in his own case. He, too, fell into disgrace, for he was one of the privileged band who so shamefully deserted their Master in the hour of His trial. We are not told that Matthew made any special protestations, but we are told that with the rest, he joined with Peter in affirming that he would never fail his Lord. Matthew the forgiven publican; Matthew the man who had been so generously treated and given a place of such privilege; surely Matthew would never fail in loyalty and gratitude! Alas! he did. Like the rest of them he must have felt at the time that he had forfeited any further claims to be included in the kingdom. But God is greater than our hearts! Greater than our fears! Greater than our failures! "AFTER the carrying away to Babylon . . ." the Lord still kept His hand on Jechoniah and restored him to an honoured place in the royal line.

GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL WISDOM

It is most instructive to consider the overruling providence of God which made sure that the nominal father of Jesus should also be a direct descendant of Abraham and David. Strictly speaking this might not have been absolutely necessary, but God's ways are so perfect that we cannot imagine His doing anything less than this, especially in view of the need for the infant Jesus to be born in Bethlehem. What a miracle of guidance must have governed this last link in the final fourteen generations which culminated in the coming of Christ.

When we are considering Divine guidance we tend to think in terms of wonderful revelations from Heaven. It is true that Joseph had such experiences when there was no other way of giving

him the necessary information. In the original coming together of Joseph and Mary, however, we have no evidence that it was anything other than a normal friendship and betrothal, the kind of thing that was happening all over the world then, and which has been happening ever since. In their case we have a wonderful example of how even the details of personal daily life can by the Lord be made to be a part of His great heavenly purpose. There is an amazing accuracy in the providential outworking of God's will. This is the final message of Matthew's genealogy of Christ.

A God-fearing couple met, loved each other and planned to marry. From what we know of them both we are sure that they prayed and sought God's will for their lives, but it is quite certain that neither of them had the faintest idea of the unique importance to God of their marriage. We may believe that with all of us there are higher thoughts than our thoughts and more wonderful ways than we imagine even in the personal affairs of the daily life of those who are "called according to his purpose".

Yet with all the romance we must remember the costliness of being so involved with the plans of God. Matthew follows up this genealogy with more than a hint of the anguish which Joseph had to endure—" . . . not willing to make her a public example . . . minded to put her away privily . . ." (v. 19). Was this to be the outcome of Joseph's prayers? Is this what it means to be honoured by a place in the royal line? Does the man whom God uses have to be a man with a breaking heart? So often it does have to be like this. The very fact that God's thoughts and ways are so much higher than ours often brings bewilderment and pain to those who commit their lives to Him.

God's royal line is a suffering line. The final figure, the fourteenth name of the third group, is the very 'Man of Sorrows' Himself. Looking back to Joseph we can see the great privilege which was his to be identified in this way with Christ the Lord. This should encourage us to commit ourselves anew to the wise providence of God, allowing Him to order and overrule our lives, that the final verdict on us also may be that we were highly privileged to have a place in God's royal line.

H. F.

THE STEWARDSHIP OF THE MYSTERY

CHAPTER TWO

THUS far we have taken account of two major matters. One, that this present dispensation—between the first and second advents of Christ—is marked out as of a particular and superlative character and significance in the eternal counsels of God, and that particular nature is the ‘making known’ of “the mystery which has been hid in God from all [other] ages and generations”. The other thing is that the Apostle Paul was “an elect vessel” with a particular, though not exclusive, relationship to “the stewardship of the [disclosed] mystery”. We have noted that he claimed this with regard to himself; that the specific Divine intervention for his ‘apprehending’ pointed to this; and we have hinted that his spiritual history was all in line with this.

We have now to take further and fuller account of this ‘vessel’ himself. In this consideration we shall find a considerable amount of instruction and enlightenment which will help us, even if it is only as a sidelight.

THE CHOSEN VESSEL

When we approach any consideration of God’s choice of vessels for His purpose, we are immediately confronted with three factors:

1. Divine sovereignty in the choice.
2. The humanity of such vessels.
3. Divine grace at work in the humanity and with the sovereignty.

So we begin with the:

(I). DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY IN THE CHOICE

While sovereignty means God’s freedom and right to choose whom He will, so that neither the vessel nor others are allowed to raise any question as to why He so chose, God does not just choose willy-nilly, at random or casually. God is the Creator and Former. He knows what He has created and how He has formed. According to *this* knowledge He chooses, and all history bears this out, as we shall see. God is able to say. “I know thee”: ‘I know what I have made’: ‘I know exactly *what* I have chosen’. In this con-

nection God’s thoughts are usually above man’s. A Moses and a Jeremiah may have a controversy with God on this question of His choosing, but God quickly answers and silences their questions. All the world may wonder why God chose the Hebrews as ‘an elect vessel’; but spiritual understanding both justifies God and finds comfort in His principle. Worldly wisdom and standards would have looked elsewhere than in the direction of Christ’s chosen Apostles, but He said, “I know whom I have chosen”, and “Ye did not choose me but I chose you”. History has done nothing but support the Divine sovereignty in all these and other cases, and history is a handmaid of the Lord. The most unlikely man on earth to break away from Judaism and become—more than any other—the Apostle of universality (not ‘universalism’) was Saul of Tarsus. But Divine sovereignty was rightly guided, and while God’s choice of him was ever a mystery to Paul, it was never a mystery to God.

We come closer to this when we consider the next aspect:

(II). THE HUMANITY OF THE VESSEL

In this connection it is possible to make too much or too little of the human factor. We can give too much room to it and make too many allowances and excuses for it, giving it too much liberty and free play; or we can be so ‘spiritual’ as to condemn all that is human, and live in an artificial realm of ‘saintliness’ which only reacts in repressions or a false conscience.

How very important it is for us to settle this matter that God has not chosen angels but *men*, and not perfected men at that!

But our present point is that for particular kinds of work God chooses particular kinds of human beings, and He has *made* peculiar kinds of humanity. The fact of variety in human nature is recognized and accepted by all. The same is true of the fact that in a more or less definite way human nature is divided into categories: not always clear-cut, but often overlapping, yet with a preponderating bias which justifies classification. We refer to the categories of human temperament. How impressive it is, and factual, that for differ-

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ent kinds of work God has chosen His instruments from different but specific categories of temperament. This is not going to be a treatise on human temperaments, but in taking the case of the Apostle Paul we are going to indicate what we believe will be helpful, instructive, and vital truth, by which we can be encouraged or warned.

We therefore proceed to define that class of human nature into which God dips for the particular work for which such men as Paul—more or less—have been divinely chosen.

But first a word of warning and re-emphasis. It is so easy and dangerous to weaken or dismiss the ministry and message of a servant of God with such a remark or dictum as—“ Well, you know, that is just the man ; he is made like that ; it is his temperament ”. By such reactions people choose their ministries and either accept or reject God’s messengers. This is the basis of many a disastrous partisanship: “ I am of Paul ; and I of Apollos ; and I of Cephas . . . ” Thus, what is God’s sovereign means for reaching a particular value is stripped of that sovereign wisdom and power, and reduced to the *merely* human element and made to be just man only.

How great an enlargement upon this could be made with profit, but having struck the note of warning, let us just make the note of re-emphasis. God has created man. He has made men to differ in temperament. Every class or order has in it the potentiality or suitability for a particular function, and God chooses men for *that*. We must recognize this principle and fact. We must accept it. When *that* instrument has fulfilled its purpose *He* will change it if it is to be changed for another, and it is only interfering with God’s sovereign prerogative to despise or set aside the vessel of His choice. This can never fail to result in irreparable loss. Make no mistake about this. The Bible is loaded with proof of it.

So we come to our particular case in point and see God choosing and working with this kind of clay. It is not difficult to recognize this material before identifying it with names and functions.

The most obvious feature or characteristic of this category, which leads to so much more, is its dislike, even intolerance of the superficial. Here we meet a basic seriousness which always gravitates to the deeper aspects of life, and seeks out the fundamentally *spiritual* realities. This is a restless disposition which, if it finds rest at all, will only do so in the deeps and not in the shallows. The profound, the unobvious, the serious draw this kind like a magnet. Their magnetic North is the

serious, the solemn, the truth of primary import.

Here we are in touch with acute sensitiveness, capacity for suffering, deep affection, poignant sympathy. Such people are concerned with the significance of things more than with the things themselves. They look for meanings behind and below things said or done. To say that they are serious-minded is to sum them up too easily.

Their perils are always in the direction of too much introspection, anxiety and worry. Tragedy as an element is a part of their makeup or constitution. The people of this class are capable of ranging great heights and plunging into great depths. Theirs is not the even temper and steady undulation of the valley or plain. They are not naturally sociable, but lean toward reserve and aloneness. Indeed, they shrink from company and publicity. But at the same time it is here that we may encounter great strength of purpose and forcefulness of personality. Such can be overbearing, aggressive, and terribly strong. Because of the deep and terrible strengths of this temperament, the dealings of God with it are more drastic than—perhaps—with any other.

Of course, every temperament finds it difficult to be patient with the others. Each feels that everybody should be as he or she is. This is very true of the class of which we are speaking. Their peril is to put—or try to put—everyone into their own disposition and make them feel the same. Grace will adjust this, as we shall see. Mary of Bethany is a clear case of this type ; seeking always the ‘ spiritual ’ and ‘ deeper ’ ; marked by the sad, even by melancholy. Martha, the so-clear case of an entirely different temperamental category, finds it so difficult to bear with her sister, and is much irritated by her ‘ spirituality ’. Experience, through grace, will lead to a harmonizing of these discords, and the variety—conflicting difference—in the same natural family will come—through discipline—to co-ordination and co-operation, as we see in the last picture of that Bethany home.

To return to our basis. Whether we like the idea or not, the story of God’s sovereign ways down the ages shows unmistakably that He has related a particular piece of work to a particular human constitution, and it is in the direction of the category of which we are now thinking that God has usually looked for leaders.

Leadership is a large subject in itself and cannot be taken up here. But the ‘ stuff ’ of leadership is that which peculiarly belongs to this kind of humanity. Features of this function are evident : vision, insight, capacity for loneliness—although

with deep sensitiveness; the alternations between abounding hopefulness and depression and despair; hatred of policy, compromise, prevarication, pretension, falsehood and hypocrisy, and such like; and fiery jealousy for principle. These are some—only *some*—of the characteristics which identify this particular class.

We are—for the moment—looking at all this on natural grounds. We have yet to open the door wide to grace and its action. What we have said is enough to introduce that school of men who, with all the weaknesses, faults, defects, perils of their capacities, have so frequently been the choice of God for pioneering and leading the way to His fuller purposes.

In the light of this imperfect delineation it is not difficult to recognize Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, Elijah, and many of the Prophets—Nehemiah, John the Baptist, Stephen—and in later times, Cromwell, Bunyan, Luther, and—if of lesser calibre—a host of ‘pioneers of the heavenly way’.

So we come to Paul. He fits so perfectly into the picture. As ‘Saul of Tarsus’ we see a perfect *natural* example of the type. As Paul the Apostle we see the type—not destroyed—but under grace. The purpose and the chosen vessel fit like a hand and glove. To Jeremiah the Lord said, “Before I formed thee . . . I knew thee, and before thou camest forth . . . I sanctified thee”. Paul was able to say, “It pleased God, who separated me, even from my mother’s womb . . .” (i.e., ‘set me apart’). Here, the point indicated is that, even before there was any operation of grace in the life, there was the operation of Divine selectiveness for a particular purpose. Jeremiah may demur on grounds of his own sense of unfitness, and Paul may be increasingly overwhelmed with the wonder of such as he being chosen, but, whatever the human reaction, the fact has to be bowed down to, as Meyers expresses it in his poem as from the lips of Paul:

‘This is His will: He takes and He refuses,
Finds Him ambassadors whom men deny,
Wise ones nor mighty for His saints He chooses,
No, such as John, or Gideon, or I.’

It may be that some who read this will react to it either with the feeling that it is not helpful to them because they do not belong to the category being considered and therefore no such usefulness falls to their lot or is possible to them; or—in any case—this is at best a study of the man Paul. We therefore pause to try to help such with a word on both of these points. As to the first: it would be

just as easy to take up *any* of the—say six main—categories or classes of human constitution (to say nothing of the over-lapping or combination of greater number) and show how—in just as definite and distinct a way—they provide God with ground for Divine purpose. It takes all to make a family. It requires every function to make a body. Paul himself has recognized this with his illustration of spiritual functions as ‘Foot, hand, eye, nose, ear’ (I Cor. xii. 12 – 31). It is true that we cannot all be Pauls. We were not meant to be, but we may be—if in lesser degree—in the category of Peter, James, John, Barnabas, etc., each of whom is in a different temperamental class, but very surely related through grace to Divine purpose. But here we are concerned with a particular aspect of the purpose and the kind of vessel needed for it. Paul was the pioneer of this for the dispensation. That is his special place. Apostolic Succession is not official, ecclesiastical, or hereditary. It is vocational and spiritual. There has been, ever since Paul, a line of those who have especially been related to that aspect of the Divine purpose, as there have been to other aspects, but the purpose is not manifold. It is one purpose with manifold aspects.

In Paul the functions of the pioneer, the foundation-layer, the master-builder, the leader, are most characteristic. Paul was peculiarly a sign of the dispensation. He called himself a ‘first one’. The great dispensational purpose for which he was chosen is discernible in his spiritual history under the hand of the Lord. This is a richly-rewarding and helpful sphere of study and observation. At a later point we shall dwell upon it again and more fully. We must, for the time being, come to our third matter.

(III). DIVINE GRACE AND THE HUMAN VESSEL

Although the sovereignty of God so evidently chooses a certain kind of human clay for a certain kind of purpose, and though sovereignty has to take responsibility for the contingencies, sovereignty operates through grace, and grace is the handmaid of sovereignty. But what is grace? The old and favourite definition of grace as ‘unmerited favour’ is comprehensive and basic, but in our present connection it is not exact enough. The human clay with all its potentialities is by no means perfectly suitable to *Divine* and *heavenly* purpose. It may have the particular dispositional properties, but in the natural man everything is mixed, complicated, distorted, and tainted. The clay has been marred and the vessel spoiled. An-

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other must be made. Paul is the most outspoken as to the incapacitation of the natural man with regard to spiritual things. The temperament of Saul of Tarsus, vehemently religious as it was, led him all astray.

So grace had to get to work to break down the natural strengths and to reconstitute according to Christ. This meant that grace had to work in terms of *spiritual* illumination and understanding; to inculcate Christly patience and forbearance, over against intolerance; to establish balance over against the natural tendency to extremes; to break down the walls of prejudice and enlarge the spirit beyond the limits of national, social, and religious exclusiveness. In a word, to redeem the true values and potentialities of the human nature, and undercut and cripple—like Jacob's thigh—the strength of selfhood. So grace is not only acceptance, it is strength under discipline, submission under chastening, meekness in adversity, and understanding when painful precautionary measures are taken, as in the case of the "thorn in the flesh" to circumvent spiritual pride. Grace is a working power unto the 'gaining of the soul', not its destruction or annihilation.

Upon the clay, divinely selected, grace gets to work, not to change the essential personality, for we shall always be ourselves, but to effect an *inward* circumcision, a cutting around or between the self-strength and a dependence wholly upon God. This is the life-long operation of the Spirit of God and the work of grace.

Grace is the source, the river, the ocean. Paul is the greatest exponent of grace (see that word in his writings) because of the greatness of the purpose to which he was chosen, and because of the tremendous forces within the particular nature and temperament which was his. While Paul might be greatly affected by the honour attached to his calling and never cease to wonder that it should be to such as *he*; Paul was never far from the consciousness of the terrific thing that had to be done in him, and of how costly to his own soul that work was. Grace, to him, related to both of these aspects. In the hands of the Potter the clay may often come very near to arguing that the Potter had made a mistake in His choice of material, or that the pressure of His hands implies His adverse judgment amounting to condemnation.

Here enters the demand for faith, and faith is the yoke-fellow of grace. To glance back at our beginning; it is disastrous in every way, and wholly wrong, to allow human temperament—our own or that of others—to govern our judgments and atti-

tudes without giving a higher place to grace.

This is what Paul meant by 'knowing after the flesh', that is, knowing apart from God. In the world this has to be done as a matter of 'common-sense', and you ignore it at your peril. But in the realm of grace other factors enter in and have to be given their due place. Men and women so often shout at us for what they are naturally; that is, Christian men and women, and it is an issue of grace to wait patiently for the Spirit in them to gain ascendancy over that strong natural life. This is just the meaning of 'growing in grace'.

What we have been saying would just resolve itself into human psychology if we did not keep that door of grace wide open. Psychology, like philosophy, can be a most deadly thing, with no way through, if Divine grace does not have its due and triumphant place.

We suspend this aspect of our consideration of "the stewardship of the mystery" by pointing to a very instructive fact.

The question has been asked—'Seeing that Jesus entered into our humanity, which category of all the human categories did He enter?' In other words, what was the particular temperamental class to which Jesus belonged? The answer is: To none and to all. It is impossible to fit Him *exclusively* into any one of the—say six—categories of human nature. If we tried to do so, we should find contradictions in every case. It just cannot be done. The fact is that He is the embodiment of the best in every category and none of the worst or faults. This is why He is able to help every type of humanity. Conformity to Christ means that the flaws, defects, and preponderances of our natural constitution will be made subservient to the Spirit of Jesus at work within us. There we must pause, for we have touched the latch of the window through which all the meaning of "the mystery" is to be seen, and it still lies before us as 'a land of far distances'.

This consideration should lead us to see at least one thing of considerable importance. It is that God never separates between the work and the worker. Because men like the great ones of the Bible have been raised up sovereignly for a Divine purpose, and have been inspired to give some eternal values to history, they have none the less, but all the more, been very drastically dealt with by God, and the natural features of their makeup have been deeply disciplined. We can never escape or be excused because we are God's servants and He has used and blessed us. It is always possible that "after having preached to others we should

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be cast away" (as instruments). Against such a possibility the Lord sets deep and serious disci-

plines; sometimes to the extent of "a messenger of Satan to buffet".

THE CHURCH—THE BODY—AS THE ANOINTED VESSEL

"Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of Jehovah came mightily upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah" (I Samuel xvi. 13).

"Thus all the work that Solomon wrought for the house of Jehovah was finished. And Solomon brought in the things that David his father had dedicated, even the silver, and the gold, and all the vessels, and put them in the treasuries of the house of God."

"And the staves were so long that the ends of the staves were seen from the ark before the oracle; but they were not seen without: and there it is unto this day."

"It came to pass, when the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking Jehovah; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised Jehovah, saying, For he is good; for his lovingkindness endureth for ever; that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of Jehovah, so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of Jehovah filled the house of God" (II Chron. v. 1, 9, 13, 14).

"Moreover, Jehovah spake unto Moses, saying . . . and thou shalt make it a holy anointing oil, a perfume compounded after the art of the perfumer: it shall be a holy anointing oil. And thou shalt anoint therewith the tent of meeting, and the ark of the testimony" (Exodus xxx. 22, 25, 26).

"And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and he entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And he opened the book, and found the place where it was written,

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

Because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor:

He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives,

And recovering of sight to the blind,

To set at liberty them that are bruised . . ."

(Luke iv. 16 - 18).

"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many" (I Cor. xii. 12 - 14).

BY linking together passages as we have done above, we are only bringing counterparts into view. We first of all see David anointed personally. Then we see the great inclusive, all-embracing purpose of David's life, and his anointing in relation to the whole testimony. In the passage in II Chronicles we see that purpose realised, and that anointing which was upon him personally now upon the temple; shall we say a collective thing: out of the personal anointing has come the collective anointing. The one leads to the other, the second is the justification of the first. The glory of the Lord filling the temple, the cloud taking up residence in the whole comprehensive order of things in the temple is the explanation of its full intent as to that individual or personal anointing which was upon David at the beginning. Then we have brought other two things together. The Lord Jesus anointed personally, separately; declaring that the Spirit of the Lord is upon Him; that is Christ personal; and alongside of that I Cor. xii. 12, 13, the one Body and the one anointing definitely mentioned, with its tremendously striking and impressive statement that: ". . . as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also is [the] Christ"—the definite article; ". . . the Christ". It is not the first time that we have said it, but it has to be brought again before us in this particular connection; for what is clearly said is this, that this anointing upon the Lord Jesus is a collective and corporate anointing, and that for present and future universal purposes Christ is so vitally one with all His members that the members, joined to the Head, have the effect of being one Christ; not meaning that Christ ceases to have a personal and separate existence, but now, for the manifestation and expression of Himself, and for the full realisation of Himself, He is no longer just a separate individual entity, but is the Head of a Body, and He is Head and Body by the

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Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has made the Head and the members one. "For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit", the Spirit of the anointing, the Spirit of the Anointed, the Christ. A tremendous statement! Let us repeat and emphasize that Christ remains the personal and distinct Son of God. The "Body" is but a means and method of His self-expression and activity.

Thus the Church becomes the anointed vessel, the Body of Christ; anointed in union with Him: "But he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit". Now to give a single emphasis to that, we read the passage from Exod. xxx in connection with the making of the holy anointing oil and underline the clause: ". . . thou shalt anoint the tent of meeting". Everything else in it and about it was to be anointed likewise, but we select the inclusive and comprehensive thing: ". . . thou shalt anoint the tent of meeting"—that is, the whole assembly. It is the tent of meeting, the tent of the congregation, and it is to be anointed.

CORPORATE ANOINTING

Now let us consider the matter of corporate anointing.

The New Testament knows nothing of merely separate, individualistic anointings. We did not say individual anointings, we said individualistic anointings. Of course, the usage of words must be understood to appreciate that distinction. The anointing does come upon us individually as members. We are not all one member, but many, and every member is anointed, but there is a difference between an individual anointing and an individualistic anointing. That which is individualistic would mean that that member is a separate thing, something apart, detached. That is what we mean by individualism, which is one of the 'isms' that is not recognized by the Lord. That is, that which makes any man or woman something apart, a law unto himself or herself, a separate entity, doing their own work, thinking their own thoughts, even religiously and spiritually. There is no such thing in the view of the New Testament as individualistic anointing. Let me put that in another way. There are not so many anointings as there are individual members of the Body of Christ. While every member will receive the anointing, it will always be *the* anointing and not his anointing or her anointing; it will always be the one anointing. You do not receive one anointing and we another. We can put that more

plainly. The Holy Spirit does not divide Himself up into as many parts as there are believers. There is but one Holy Spirit. "There is one body, and one Spirit . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all . . ." The anointing is made to reside on and within the Lord Jesus as Head of the Body. It is the Head which receives the anointing always. The rest of the Body gets this benefit by reason of its relation to the Head, it comes into the good of the anointing by being organically united with the Head. The anointing is upon the Lord Jesus as Head of the Body, the Church. Our receiving of the anointing is as we come into the Body of Christ and under the sovereign Headship of the Lord Jesus as anointed. This one anointing is for all members, but only by reason of corporate and organic union with Christ as Head. So that the anointing is one anointing and not many anointings. All the members share in the anointing, but never receive an anointing separate from the rest, *in the thought of God*. Now that has a very wide range of meaning.

GOD IS AGAINST SEPARATENESS

It means, in the first place, that God recognizes no independence, spiritual independence, on the part of His people. God never goes with a spirit of independence, of separation, of detachment. Now we must come back and be very elementary in explaining that. We are saying 'a spirit of detachment', 'a spirit of separation'. There are times when by reason of denial of foundational verities of the faith there has to be a withdrawing, but that is not a spirit of separation in the sense in which we are using the term. We mean that disposition to be exclusive, to be separate, to be detached, to work apart, to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, to work and act independently of other believers with whom the Lord has joined us in Himself; the *spirit* of separation.. The Lord is not with that, and never goes with that. The direction of the Holy Spirit is always toward fellowship and oneness. The whole direction of Satanic activity is to divide, to split up and cause friction, warfare, conflict. That has been the effect of sin and Satan. As we have said earlier, Calvary sees that work of the Devil dealt with, and that is why the Lord Jesus, right on the verge of His cross, prayed the prayer of John xvii: ". . . that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us". That is the prayer with which He went to Calvary, and that prayer was answered in Calvary. That prayer has been wholly and fully

answered in the cross. Beloved, you and we *in Christ* will never be more one than we are. In ourselves the oneness may be weak and lacking but in Christ we are organically one, sharing one life. In the Christ who is at the right hand of God there is the unity of the born-again ones which can never be improved upon. That is a testimony in Heaven. The Body *is* one, says the Word ; it is one in Him, in the Head. The Holy Spirit's presence in all the members of the Body constitutes a oneness deeper than consciousness, reason, feeling, recognition ; a very life basis. A oneness is constituted deep down in every child of God like the oneness which exists between the Father and the Son, and when we get to Heaven and enjoy that oneness to the full without interference of this old-man element which divides and limits the fellowship now, we shall not be more one than in reality than we are now : it will then be manifested. We are never commanded to make the unity of the Spirit, we are exhorted to keep it, to guard it. That means that first of all we must take it as existing. The Body is one, so also is the Christ. He prayed that prayer as He went to the cross, and in the cross that prayer was answered. The testimony of Jesus includes that great truth that by His cross He has conquered the enemy, and destroyed that part of the enemy's work which brought disruption into God's creation. And in the new creation that spiritual, organic oneness is not only recovered but established beyond reach of again being destroyed. We shall come to the enjoyment of it only as we come to Heaven, as we leave earth. We are not now speaking literally, but spiritually. As we are linked with anything on this earth which is of a dividing character, then we miss the glory of the oneness of the Body and the oneness of Christ. The more earth-bound we are religiously, ecclesiastically, the more we fail of that heavenly reality of the oneness of the Body. Or to put it the other way, the more we come to our heavenly position the more we find it impossible to allow man-ruled systems, which divide believers into groups, to operate and govern our lives. We are out of all such, set free because the unity is in the Head in Heaven, and as we come to the heavens we come to Ephesians, where the Body is seen in oneness.

ORGANIC ONENESS §

We have illustrated these spiritual things by the human body and its double system of control. This body of ours physically is a unity. While it has many members, organs and functions, yet it is a

unity, and it is made an organic unity, one thing, by a double system of control. One is the blood system, the other is the nerve system. The blood system makes the body a whole as an organic living thing. Strangle any one member, stop circulation, and before long that member ceases to be an active part of that organism. The whole blood system makes the body a single active living unity. The other is the nerve system. We know that every needle point of this entire physical body is governed and controlled by the nerve system. Now this whole nerve system has its base in the head, so that we cannot touch the most minute point with the finest needle without touching the head and registering that touch in the intelligence which resides in the head. If you understand the brain and take a needle and go from point to point in the brain you can put out of action any member of the body. Now the Body of Christ is a counterpart of that spiritually.

ONENESS IN LIFE

The blood system which makes our physical bodies one organically while in action, has its counterpart in the Divine life that is given to us in new birth. We receive life in Christ and that life in the whole body is one life. The great circulation of Divine life through the body is the basis of not only the oneness, but active oneness, in relation to Christ. If the life is strangled, if that circulation is interrupted, then the wholeness of the Body is spoiled. If two members only, brought into working relationship in the Body of Christ by the Holy Spirit, indwelt by the Divine life, should come to a place where one of them has violated the spiritual laws of Divine life and thus arrested the circulation, these two will begin to find it difficult to work together, they will no longer be able to co-operate and help one another. There has come about an arrest upon the active principle of corporate life in the Body. So that an Achan can arrest the progress of all Israel on the principle that Israel (in type) is a corporate whole governed by one life ; and when one member violates the laws of that life all the Body is affected. To put it the other way round ; when all the members have a full tide of Divine life flowing uninterrupted and unhindered, then you get a mighty corporate movement. That is how it was at the beginning. Ananias and Sapphira represent the enemy's effort to interfere with that corporate life and to check the movement of the whole Body, and it was said to be a sin against the Holy Ghost. (This life is not abstract, but in the Holy

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spirit.) The seriousness of that is, that Satan had interfered, and they, in complicity with Satan, had threatened the entire movement of the Holy Spirit in the Church in those days. Now you have in Ananias and Sapphira a literal outworking of that passage in I Cor. iii. 16: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" That is collective, corporate; that is the assembly. The "ye" there is the House of God, not the physical body of I Cor. vi. 19, where the language is singular, not plural. Now note what God says: "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy". See how jealous God is for the Body of Christ, the House of God, the assembly. Ananias and Sapphira came to judgment in death because in truth the Devil had captured them to arrest and destroy the corporate testimony in the House of God as it was launched on its way in the beginning. It was a blow against the oneness of the Body under the one anointing, and that met this word: ". . . him shall God destroy".

Beloved, it is a terrible thing to put our hand upon the assembly, it is a terrible thing to touch the Body of Christ. Psalm cv puts that very plainly: ". . . yea, he reproveth kings for their sakes; saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm". The assembly is the anointed vessel and we see that the enemy is out to thwart the mighty effect of that one anointing, to interrupt the progress of it. The one life is seen there corresponding to the blood system. This is the one life by which we move, which is our energy; Divine life given to us in the Holy Spirit.

ONENESS IN INTELLIGENCE

But then the nervous system in our physical body also has its parallel in the corporate Body of Christ in the Holy Spirit. He is both life and intelligence. These two things cannot be separated, but there is a difference. The Holy Spirit is the intelligence of this oneness; it is the nerve system by which we are made aware of things. We have the intelligence of the whole Body by the nerve system because that is registered in the Head; and the Holy Spirit, the one Spirit, makes the Body one in action by a registration of the Divine mind. How important it is to have spiritual intelligence in order to have the Body perfectly functioning. These two things go together. The eyes of the heart had to be enlightened by a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in order to see the full meaning of the Body of Christ. That is the 'Ephesian' position. The Apostle is praying "that

. . . that . . . that . . ." Notice the successive 'thats' governing his petitions, and all those petitions are in relation to the Body's union with Christ. The basic thing is: ". . . having the eyes of your heart enlightened" there being given "a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him". We shall blunder on and make all kinds of mistakes and confusions if the Lord does not give us spiritual intelligence; if we do not recognize that the anointing is meant to bring to us intelligence as to the Lord's mind. I John ii. 20, 27 comes in again to our help. "And ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all things", and of that it is said, ". . . and it is true and is no lie". That chapter, I John ii, is a chapter of antichrist and Christ, Christ and antichrist. Many antichrists shall come and declare themselves to be Christ, assume the garb of Christ, the language of Christ, the phraseology of Christ, many of the ways of Christ; but still antichrist; so subtle, so impossible of recognition by the ordinary intelligence even at its best. Over against the antichrists—with their wellnigh perfect counterfeiting of Christ—is Christ the Anointed; but the antichrist is a "christ" without the anointing, and therefore a denial, for "christ" means—"anointed". How are you to know where the anointing is, that is, where Christ is? The anointing in you tells you where the anointing is and where it is not. The anointing is one anointing and recognizes His own expression. Mark that well. The anointing is one. Some one or some system comes and poses as Christ the Anointed, but is not the Anointed. How are you going to know that the anointing is not there? By the anointing which is in you which is one anointing, which does not have fellowship with *that*. But when that which is of the anointing is present the anointing in you flows out to it. That is something which only the anointed ones have, something we cannot define, and is not something mental. You are not able to sit down and put on paper precisely where the antichrists are wrong; it is the anointing in you that tells you before you can reason or analyse. That is not misjudging, but you know because the anointing in you teaches you. 'How do you know?' 'I cannot tell you, but I know'. That is, the Lord in you does not let go to that, does not flow out to that, does not give liberty and sanction to that; and you must wait until the Lord does; sooner or later you will have the explanation. There is all the difference between that and our natural suspicions and prejudices. Oh, that the Lord's people would know the Holy Ghost and be delivered from all that bondage which comes along the line of eternally suspecting

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everything with which they come into contact! Beloved, if in your heart the Holy Spirit witnesses to the fact that another is a child of God, that is all you want as a *basis* of fellowship.

Now this intelligence which corresponds to the nerve system is all linked up in the Head and that is what Paul means when he says: "We have the mind of Christ". How do we have the mind of Christ? The anointing! It does not mean that any one of us has reached the place where we immediately know the Lord's will about every detail in our lives. The anointing does not work out in that way immediately. There are many things about which we are not sure as to the will of God, but we do know this, that if we are walking in the Spirit and the anointing is free within us, if we take or essay to take a step out of line or out of time with the Lord, the Spirit does not go with us and we know that we go on our own. This is simple but it is true. The Spirit of Jesus suffers us not. It may only be a matter of time, or it may be a matter of finality, that that is not the Lord's will for our lives. The intelligence of the anointing is the Holy Spirit who would give to all the members the one mind of Christ. We cannot conceive of an organic unity having half-a-dozen contradictory and conflicting minds.

It may be asked, how is it to be explained that so many godly, consecrated people are entirely different in their attitude towards certain vital things? We do not know that we are called upon to account for that, and certainly we are not called upon to judge any man, but we do venture to say this, that it can easily be accounted for by the measure in which the cross of the Lord Jesus has been wrought into those lives. Which means this, that still there may be a clinging to something of good which is not the Lord's best, and that means that the Holy Spirit is not free to lead out of the one into the other; and there you get the difference. We are certain of this, that the deeper we are baptized into the death of Christ the more we shall know of the oneness of the Spirit, because that is the ground upon which the Spirit operates—the death of Christ. We must remember that no man has as yet reached 'fulness' or perfection.

The foregoing covers some ground as to the corporate nature of the anointing. It is only perhaps by way of illustration, but we think it is useful in bringing to us the fact with which we are dealing, that the anointing is one, the Spirit is one, the Body is one.

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

WATER OF LIFE

WATER! WATER! I could think of nothing else.

This was the second day in which we had been wandering, lost in the forest. Now I knew a little of the sufferings of those who can find no water, and thought how dreadful it must be to die of thirst. I was not in a desert of sand, but in the Amazonian jungle. We had no water. And we were lost. My two Red Indian guides could be trusted to bring me out to water at last, for they had a strange ability to search out the rivers which divide up those great forests. Yet the question was as to whether I could keep walking until we reached a river. How much longer could I struggle on without water? I wondered.

The day before we had moved away from our camp by a stream, and since then had marched on in the heat with no drink at all. We had camped at night still without any sign of water. Our mouths were too parched for us to feel able to eat. I had woken up many times during the

night, from strange dreams of finding water and then not being able to drink and always with a more intense longing for water.

Now it was well into the second day, and still we had no water. My guides showed little signs of their distress. Impassive as the Asiatics from whom they are supposed to be descended, they were not in the habit of letting their faces reveal what they were thinking. Nor did they show any great excitement when by God's mercy we did get relief.

It happened like this. As the afternoon drew on, we climbed on to a higher piece of ground where the trees were less dense. The Indians stopped and uttered the one word *ee*, which in their language meant 'water'. To me it seemed like mockery. Streams run on low ground not on high ground. I looked round, and could see no sign of the water of which they spoke. However, there were no signs that they were not serious, and in any case they were already putting their packs on

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the ground, and one of them drew out his drinking gourd.

When I had looked around for the missing water, I had noticed some unusual bush vines, thick as cables, which draped the trees, hanging down like curtains. I asked the Indians where the water was, and they answered by pointing to the vines. I was so eager to get a drink of the precious water that I pulled out my bush knife to cut the vine, but I was brushed aside by one of the men, who told me that if I did that I should get no water.

"You must go to the top first", he said. I wondered if I had misunderstood his words, but realised that this was what he had really said when I saw his companion begin to climb one of the trees from which the vines were hanging. The man with the gourd told me to hold the drain-pipe-like vine, while the other man higher up cut through it with his *machete*. I held on, puzzled but anxious not to miss a drop of the precious water.

Then when the Indian had climbed down again, he cut through the vine down by my knees, while the other held the gourd underneath the new cut. Sure enough, water began to run down into the gourd. It was stale looking, full of dirty froth, but it was water! To me it tasted delicious. I felt that it had saved my life. We all quenched our parched mouths with this repulsive but most welcome fluid. After this I felt a different man, and was able to struggle on with my two guides, until

at last we came to a flowing stream where there was water in abundance.

After that terrifying experience I often thought of the life-saving water, and how I nearly lost it by my ignorance and impulsiveness. It seems that if I had cut the vine at the lower end, there would have been no water for us. It could not flow out into the dish which was held underneath to receive it. Firstly there had to be action from above.

The more I think about it, the more it seems to be a picture of how God gives eternal life. Just as it was a wonderful moment for me to get a drink when I was almost overcome by my raging thirst, so it is a wonderful experience when the person who is spiritually thirsty comes to the Lord Jesus to drink His gift of the water of life. But this water can never come to us by our own efforts. As I have said, firstly there had to be action from above.

This is the action which God took when He gave the Lord Jesus to be our Saviour, and to die on the Cross for us. That has made possible the release of living water to all who are thirsty in heart. If, then, we trust, not in what we can do, but in what Christ has already done for us, then we can drink freely of the water of life. There is no need for any to suffer from spiritual thirst. It is the Lord Jesus who says, "I am the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely" (Revelation 21. 6).

H. F.

GOD'S INSTRUMENT IN A DAY OF DECLENSION

"And it came to pass, as her soul was departing (for she died), that she called his name Ben-oni: but his father called him Benjamin" (Gen. xxxv. 18).

"And he lifted up his eyes, and saw Benjamin his brother, his mother's son, and said, Is this your youngest brother, of whom ye spake unto me? And he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son, And Joseph made haste; for his heart yearned over his brother: and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there" (Genesis xliii. 29 - 30, A.S.V.)

"And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I poured out my soul before the Lord. . . . And it came to pass, when the time was come about, that Hannah conceived, and bare a son; and she called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the Lord" (I Samuel i. 15, 25).

"And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli. And the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no frequent vision. And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place (now his eyes had begun to wax dim, so that he could not see), and the lamp of God was not yet gone out, and Samuel was laid down to sleep, in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was; that the Lord called Samuel: and he said, Here am I" (I Samuel iii. 1 - 4).

THREE MAJOR GOVERNING FACTORS

THERE are three things about which it is very necessary for us to be quite clear and certain. I will state them briefly and concisely without comment or enlargement.

1. The first is that God never gives up His original decision to bring His people to spiritual fulness.

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2. The second is that, if His people, in general, move away from His intention, He raises up vessels and ministries both to bring that intention into view, and, as far as possible, to recover His people to it.

3. And the third thing is that those vessels and ministries have a peculiar and particular history under His hand. They are in a peculiar way governed by the purpose for which they are raised up.

TWO SECONDARY FACTORS

There are two subsidiary factors in that connection.

i. One is that such vessels and ministries must not compare or judge themselves by other standards, by other ministries, by other things that the Lord may be doing. Neither should they be judged by others. God is dealing with them in a particular way, for a particular purpose, not necessarily saying that they are more important than others, but the fact is that they are called to a particular work, which is complementary, not exclusive.

ii. The second thing is that if the purpose of God is corporate, the corporate factor will govern the instrument that He raises up. That is a very important thing to remember.

This means that each individual within the compass of that ministry and its purpose will himself or herself be governed by the corporate law. Each individual will be a part of something much more than himself or herself, a part of a corporate whole, and will therefore have his or her experience under God's hand in a related way. It will not be just something personal and private. Would that you could remember that and follow it out! For the present we shall not do more than seek some help which we may find in these two of whom we have read—Benjamin and Samuel.

FEATURES COMMON TO BENJAMIN AND SAMUEL

You probably recognize that there are a number of features common to Benjamin and Samuel.

1. Firstly, they were both sons in a peculiar way. Benjamin was distinguished from his brethren, and, as we read, Joseph took special account of Benjamin, just as their father had done. He stood in a particular and peculiar relationship both to the father and to his brethren. Samuel was the same. The sonship of Samuel was quite distinctive,

of a different kind from the others. We will not stay with it—we note the fact, but remember that it is not superiority or favouritism that governs, but function.

2. The second thing about them was that they were both born of peculiar travail. Rachel died at the birth of Benjamin, and named him Ben-oni, 'Son of my sorrow', born out of sorrow. And we know well of Hannah's distress and sorrow and trial and travail unto Samuel.

3. Then they both came out of a state of death. That is perfectly clear with Benjamin. Rachel died; Benjamin lived out of her death. Samuel had a background of death, for that was the state of Hannah, and the state of Hannah was only a reflection of the spiritual state of the Lord's people, and out of that grave, that death, Samuel was born.

4. Again, they both came in at a time of spiritual declension. The days of Benjamin were the days when those brothers, indeed the whole family, Joseph excepted, were in a very poor state spiritually. The selling of Joseph and all that bad conduct and behaviour is the unveiling of a very poor state in the sons of Israel. We know what a state the Lord's people were in in Samuel's days. That needs no further comment.

5. And then they both represented a turning-point. Benjamin clearly was that—the turning-point in this whole story. It was upon Benjamin, "little Benjamin", that the whole thing turned. The verse that we picked out from the story, the coming of the brothers to Joseph in Egypt and Joseph lighting upon his youngest brother, is the turning-point. And how true that was of Samuel. He was a turning-point in Israel; so much turned upon him.

A PECULIAR HISTORY UNDER GOD'S HAND

Well, these two clearly set forth a vessel such as that of which we spoke at the beginning—the vessel by which God moves into a state of spiritual decline to bring His own full thought into view, and, as far as possible, to recover His people unto it, and such a vessel, as I have said, will have a peculiar kind of history under God's hand, and it is just that history that we want to touch upon here.

A CLEAR-CUT BEGINNING

It is very simple in its presentation; not so simple when you come to go through it. In the first

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place, such a vessel has to begin at the beginning. When the Lord was going to move in at those times, He did not move in through a fullgrown man with a lot of history. He moved in through Benjamin, the youngest—you might call him the infant amongst them. With Samuel He started right back there at his birth. In this dispensation, the vessel that is going to bring into view God's thought, and recover to it as far as can be, will have to be taken right back behind much that has been built up and become common and accepted. It will have to be taken back to start at the beginning. It may have had a Christian life, a Christian upbringing ; it may have had behind it much of Christianity ; but there will come a crisis when it will seem as though there had been nothing before at all. ' This is the beginning: we are starting all over again now!' There must be somewhere in the history of such an instrument that clear-cut beginning which is not just the carry-over of a history, the carry-over of form and formalism, but something tremendous, as though there had never been anything before. This is a break in history! It will have to be like that with such a vessel. It is like beginning all over again with a new conception—some have said a new Bible ; beginning at the beginning.

A DIFFERENCE

The second thing about these two and about all such instrumentalities is that they must not be a part of the existing spiritual condition. How separate were Hannah and Samuel from the existing condition. Whatever had settled down on Israel, Hannah was not a part of that ; she was in revolt against it, she was in travail over it, she was different. As to Samuel, it is so perfectly clear that he was apart. The same was true of Benjamin. There was something different. He was not one of those brothers, those ten brothers. There was a difference. I mention it, and you think about it—that, if we are going to be useful to the Lord in any greater purpose of His heart, we shall have to be no part of that which is content and satisfied with something less, and certainly no part of that which is contrary to His mind. There is to be a difference about us.

How true all this was of the Lord Jesus Himself.

THE VOICE OF THE LORD KNOWN

The third thing here is that such have to learn the voice of the Lord for themselves. That comes out very clearly in Samuel. To learn the voice of

the Lord for himself was essential to his future ministry. He could be put in the way of learning it, but he had to learn it for himself. The Lord never came to Eli and told Eli what He wanted Samuel to know. He had to come to Samuel himself, and right there from the beginning Samuel had to learn to recognize and discern and understand the voice of the Lord for himself, directly and personally—and how important that is! That may explain a great deal of the Lord's work with us, with some of you. Why is the Lord dealing *with you* as He is, and why is it that you can get so little second-hand help in your deepest problem? The Lord is seeking to make you know Him personally at first hand ; not to make you independent, but to make you useful. That is very important.

THE NEED FOR FAITHFULNESS

Further, such an instrument has to be faithful, even though it seems presumptuous. Naturally it would appear very presumptuous for little Samuel, the child Samuel, to go to Eli and point out where he was wrong. The Lord did not commission Samuel to go and rebuke his elder ; but when Eli pressed the point—' What is it that the Lord has said? hide it not from me '—and, so to speak, put Samuel in a corner and would not let him out—Samuel realised that he had to be faithful. Sometimes we are called upon to be faithful when it just seems like presumption. It must be done in a spirit of meekness, but, as the Apostle says, in all faithfulness. Such a vessel must be faithful, that is the point—faithful to what the Lord has said and has shown.

And as we advance, the difficulties seem to increase and become more acute. In Samuel's case, the next thing was that he had to do what the strange ways of God required, even though his own heart rebelled against it. I am thinking of Saul. Samuel's heart rebelled against making Saul king. He knew why the people had brought Saul forward. He knew that they were giving up the government of the Lord in having a king like unto the nations. His heart rebelled, but the Lord said, ' Do it!' in effect, ' Trust My wisdom, I know what I am doing ; you do it!' Faithfulness to the Lord sometimes requires that we do many things in those sovereign orderings of God with which we ourselves naturally do not agree. That is pressing things very closely, but it is like that sometimes. The Lord took that strange way. The Lord said to Samuel, " They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me " (I Samuel viii. 7) ; ' Nevertheless, you have to go

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and anoint that man'; and, with a big question in his heart, Samuel had to do the thing that the strange ways of God required. God was only helping the people to their own conclusions, to expose their folly.

A PRAYER MINISTRY

That would require quite a lot of time to analyse and apply. But what are we getting at? We are getting to the final thing and the inclusive thing with Samuel. Samuel's whole life-ministry was fulfilled through prayer. The Lord singled out Samuel as one of two who, if any could possibly prevail with God, then they would. "Though Moses and *Samuel* stood before me, yet my mind would not be toward this people" (Jeremiah xv.1). If *anybody* can prevail with God it is Samuel. You know the life of Samuel—what a prayer-life it was, how the people took account of it. "Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us" (I Sam. vii. 8). "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you" (I Sam. xii. 23). His ministry was mainly a ministry of prayer, which meant that he had to have a place with God so complete and utter that his own reasonings did not come in, his own feelings did not come in, nothing about himself came in. He was right there with God, and although God told him to do things which seemed altogether contrary to God, and certainly contrary to his own best judgment, he obeyed. He knew how it would work out. He could not understand why the Lord was doing it; but he obeyed. We cannot have power with God unless God has got us into a place like that.

A PECULIAR CORPORATE HISTORY

We would like to say very much more about this, but we want to close with an extra emphasis, an emphasis upon the point which we made a little while ago: namely, the character of a vessel which God may raise up for the purpose of recovering amongst His people His own full thought concerning them and concerning His Son. Such a vessel, based upon and governed by the corporate principle, will have a peculiar history. There is something about such a work and such a ministry and such a purpose which is different.

In the whole range of His sovereign purpose to bring to a knowledge or to a fuller knowledge of Christ, God raises up and uses many particular instrumentalities and ministries. It may be distinctive preachers and preaching places. He has

done this, and is still doing it. Or it may be a ministry for 'the deepening of spiritual life', and special gifts may be given for this. There are various other particular aspects of God's activity toward His one end, and each is to be recognized, honoured, and respected. We are here concerned with one of these, and our point is that each is dealt with by God in a way which is peculiar and essential to its particular function and purpose in the whole. This ministry of which we are here speaking is different from many others, and being so, is dealt with by God in a peculiar way. A preaching gift, ministry, and place has its particular purpose, but it does not mean that it necessarily brings into being a corporate organic expression of Christ, and while the material for the House of God may be gathered and instructed by it, it does not always follow that a really related organism such as that referred to above is brought into being. The same may be said of Convention ministry, or a ministry for the deepening of the spiritual life of individual Christians.

When the Lord is concerned with this corporate factor, as He most certainly is, He deals with the vessel and ministry in a particular way; their history is different. The matter of relatedness is a very great factor in spiritual fulness. The matter of dependence upon one another is a very great factor in spiritual enlargement. We are going to learn a very great deal more fulness in Christ, in a related way, than we should do as individuals under the best ministry. Therefore the Lord deals with those who constitute such a vessel, not just as individuals. They are required, every one of them, to take this attitude: 'God is dealing with me in relation to a number of people, all of whom constitute for Him a vessel for a particular purpose, and the only explanation of His ways with me is that related principle. If I were an individual by myself, I should not have to have many of the experiences that I have, and if I had my way, I would get away from all these people as soon as I could and get on on my own and know the Lord for myself without all this business of relatedness!' To take such a course would be to lose the main thing that God is after—you would just get right out of the way of that thing which is nearest to His heart: because for a corporate purpose He must have a corporate instrument, and so He must deal with us on that basis of relationship—and everything is related. Therefore in this realm the enemy will make the breakdown of fellowship his chief object.

Do not take your trying and difficult experiences, your sufferings, as merely personal. Paul

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was so emphatic and clear about that principle. "I . . . fill up . . . that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ . . . for his body's sake, which is the church" (Col. i. 24). He could have put it in another way and said—"The sufferings that come upon me are not my personal sufferings in relation to my own separate spiritual life and growth. It is not just an individual and separate thing that I am going through, that God wants to bring me personally and alone into some greater fulness of spiritual life. It is related to His whole Body. Believe that and it will be a help, because we are part of some larger thing, to serve a larger purpose than we as individuals, however much we might know of the Lord, could serve. There is a far greater value to the Lord in having an organic vessel in the greater fulness of Christ than in having a number of separate individuals going on with Him. So that He deals with such in a particular and peculiar way. They have experiences under His hand which are different.

Put yourself into Benjamin's place, in that history that is gathered around the bringing of the father and Joseph and all the brethren together in one family in the good of the Lord's purpose. It was a disrupted family, a family in spiritual decline. It was in a bad way. God called that family through Abraham that it should be the family representing His full thought in the nations, and now it was like this. How is it going to be brought together in the land of Goshen, how is it going to be

formed into the spiritual Israel? 'Little Benjamin' is the key. But look at his experiences. When at last under Joseph's insistence they brought him, tore him from his father's heart and brought him—and then Joseph sent them away and kept Benjamin! Put yourself in Benjamin's place. He is going through a pretty hard time. When Joseph's cup was found in the sack of Benjamin!—Joseph, acting a part, sent his messenger after them, saying he had missed his cup—and he had deliberately had it put in that sack! This is strange Providence, these are mysterious ways, for Benjamin. Everything seems to be against him. He could have said, 'I am not responsible for this, it is all going against me, I am involved in a trick'. So he was brought back as under a shadow. That lad is going through a difficult time because he is the link.

Samuel, likewise, had no easy time. It was something different. Space does not allow for us to work it out in fulness, but this is the peculiar nature of a vessel that is to meet a peculiar need, and this is the particular kind of history that every part of that instrument will have, which is different from all else. So we cannot judge others, nor can we judge our own position in the light of others; and others should not judge us. The Lord Himself knows what He is doing.

He sifts and winnows; threshes and grinds; and in the process much will fall away, but He will have His bread-corn.

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“ GREAT
IS THY
FAITHFULNESS ”



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EDITORIAL

IT is probable that our readers may often wonder—and with good reason—what the difference is between many of our 'Editorials' and the other parts of the paper, i. e., other messages. This is our answer and explanation.

It is that, unless there is an occasion for some special announcement by the editor, the object of the 'Editorial' is to focus the whole of our essential and particular ministry upon some basic and inclusive feature. It is ever important, in the many aspects of the truth which have their place in this ministry, to keep always present something that will help to answer the question: What is it *all* about? That, then, is our object as we offer this, one further 'Editorial'.

There is a vast amount of history stretching through all time behind this present pointer, and, with an open Heaven, a considerable volume is required to do it justice, and not a mere page or two. The tragedies which thrust themselves upon our consciousness from every direction and in every connection—in the world and in Christendom—demand an explanation, and, although we are under no illusion as to the acceptance of the explanation, nor cherish any false hope that such explanation will make much difference, it has always been a part of God's way to speak, irrespective of acceptance or rejection, and to leave the issue with those who will give heed to the challenge.

In searching for a sentence that will serve as a window through which what we have in view can

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

be seen the one that seems most potent is

THE CURSE OF THE EARTH TOUCH.

To understand what is meant by those last three words is to have an explanation of an immense amount of history, spiritual and temporal.

We must begin by re-emphasizing the fact that *this earth lies under a curse*. This is emphatically stated both in Genesis iii. 18, 19, and Romans viii. 20 - 23.

Although Christ effected redemption by His Cross, that is but potential as to the creation and only spiritual in the case of those who are "In Christ". Both the "creation itself" and "our body" await "the manifestation of the sons of God", the consummation of the redemptive work. Believers alone are delivered from the "curse". Meantime, the creation groans under it.

This earth is to be destroyed and purged by fire II Peter iii. 7, 10 - 13. These words of so many centuries ago are so much more easily understood now by all men than they were when written. The rapidity of progress toward this consummation in less than our lifetime surely cries "the day of the Lord is at hand". So, the curse is present; it is rapidly gathering momentum, and very few—if any—parts of the earth are escaping from its closing in for the final phase and climax.

The nature and features of the curse, as the Bible everywhere reveals, are frustration, thwarting, bafflement, discontent, abortion, confusion, travail, breakdown, and an ever-defeated struggle against despair and death.

There are three realms in which these elements are clearly discernible.

Firstly, these elements are plain to be seen in the world. Call it what you will; explain it as you may try to do; the fact remains that chaos deepens and extends so that the accumulated best brains and highest training in national and international councils are out of their depth in the solution of the problems confronting them. This is so obvious that we need not use time and space to argue and prove it. We are no more pessimistic than the Bible is with regard to the later phases of this world's history, and never was there a time when its description of things at the end could be agreed with more than now—"Men fainting for fear, and for expectation of the things which are coming on the inhabited earth; for the powers of the heavens shall be shaken" (Luke xxi. 26). We do not need this first aspect of the situation to be put into writing. We are reading it every day in our newspapers and in the happenings in all the nations.

The second realm is that of Christendom in general. Here again we are confronted with a situation which is extending all the 'World Councils' to their limits. It would be far from profitable to gather up the things being said and done in the realm of 'Christianity' which clearly indicate that 'Christianity' is in the casualty ward in a critical condition, needing every expedient, appliance, measure, mechanism, and recourse to justify its existence. Some 'Christian' leaders go as far as to speak of this as 'the post-Christian age'. This is all very horrible and terrible, but the common language of 'our unhappy divisions'; 'our man-made divisions', etc., etc., and all the feverish efforts to patch up by compromise; the sacrifice of that which cost so much, and so forth, only evidence the fact that things are not all well in Christendom; far from it!

But, for us, the saddest and most grievous aspect of this situation is to be found in that realm which can be called 'Evangelical'. It is not too strong a thing to say that we have come to a time when the atmosphere is saturated with a spirit of suspicion, fear, scepticism, discrediting, distrust, misgiving, loss of confidence, etc. There is literally nothing which escapes the lash of criticism, the paralysing touch of reservation or question. It is positively amazing how quickly and easily good people will accept what Paul called (*as to himself*) "evil report", and in accepting it without investigating and "proving all things", repeat it and warn others of those concerned. A famous preacher once said to the writer about a certain Christian leader that 'the grapes of Eshcol would turn to raisins in his hands.' This spirit of suspicion and criticism withers the fairest blossoms and dries up the most beautiful fruit of the Spirit's producing. Many a ministry of Christ has been ruined by it,

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and the hand of the Lord withholds bread and wealth because of it, so that a characteristic of evangelicalism in our time is superficiality. There is "a famine of hearing the Word", and this is a judgment upon the spirit which treats the Word so cheaply as not to regard it as something worthy of the most jealous concern.

But we have to press on to our conclusion, and in doing so we have to observe and ask further questions.

Why is it that so many things which have greatly served the purpose of God have eventually fallen apart; broken up; and have little more than a great past to live upon? Why is it that the Lord Himself has not circumvented this and preserved intact these instruments and vessels that He has used?

Why is it that division upon division follows almost endlessly the course of many things which have been very jealous for an utter position as to Bible truth? These and many such questions have but one answer. That answer is THE EARTH TOUCH.

Somewhere, somehow, that blighting contact has been made. There has been a gesture toward this earth. *Man* has put his hand on heavenly things and tried to bring them on to this earth. It might be a 'New Testament Church' of a composite nature: certain things taught, enacted, and done in conformity to the record in the New Testament; a certain order, technique, and construction; these things have been drawn together for a creed, a form of procedure, and made the 'basis', the form and standard, the 'constitution' of a body, an institution, a society: man's mind and man's hand defining, controlling, holding. The verdict of history is that God will just not commit Himself to any such thing.

When the Church first actually came into being, it was "born from above", composed of such as had had a tremendous—we might almost say, a *terrific*—crisis, a devastating crisis in relation to the Cross of Christ. When the churches came into being, in every case, it was a local repetition of this inward upheaval and revolution. The churches were never made by man or men, be they the greatest Apostles. The Apostles did not take a 'Blue Print' of New Testament churches wherever they went. The outcome of their work was a crisis, a climax to an old creation and the *fiat* of the new. What followed of order and knowledge was organic, not organized; spontaneous, not imposed; life, not legality; and—*above all*—heavenly, not earthly. It was only when man pulled this down on to the earth that things went wrong.

God has many times made a new move with something heavenly, but invariably there has been a tremendous impact of Heaven upon those first brought into it. There was such a fundamental severance between earth and Heaven in them, in which 'all things were new'; an inward *break* that—for them—set two worlds apart and irreconcilable. If tragedy came later it can be seen to have been on two counts.

1. Those first-ones violated the very principle of their own history by seeking to crystallize that history into a form and framework for others. They presented or imposed a set form instead of keeping in full view the meaning of "Christ crucified" and *travailing for the crisis* in others.

2. Then others have come in, but on either false or inadequate ground. They have felt the life, seen the good (objectively); and have wanted the values. But all has been without the cost and the crisis: no brokenness, no shattering crisis, no open Heaven, no travail; just the blessing, and—perhaps—place. Their former mentalities, traditions, ambitions, were untouched; their natural judgments intact. The earth touch has thus been made and the character of things has changed. A story of confusion, contradiction, and loss of measure, impact, and heavenly glory has slowly, almost imperceptibly begun, and only at some later crisis has it broken upon that people that a change has come about which spells decline.

Oh, this earth touch! How deadly it is! When will the Lord's people understand the essential meaning of their union with Christ *in Heaven*!

We must leave it there for now; maybe more later.

EDITOR

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

THE STEWARDSHIP OF THE MYSTERY

CHAPTER THREE

NOTE. In a number of issues of this paper we have been occupied with two aspects of the Divine Horizon, viz:—

- i. All things horizoned by Christ.
- ii. All things horizoned by Purpose.

There are other aspects of Horizon yet to be considered, but when we come to "The Stewardship of the Mystery", we find the above two major aspects converging or coming together. And so, we move on from those aspects as two, and take them up in their oneness in the "Mystery".

I. AN ADDITIONAL WORD ABOUT THE VESSEL

We have, in our last chapter, given some particular consideration to Paul as the specially chosen 'vessel' for this stewardship, and while we do not want to allow him to eclipse other chosen vessels, we feel how necessary it is to recognize that we cannot really understand the peculiar nature of the dispensation in which we live unless we recognize the peculiar and special nature of this vessel and its deposit.

We dare therefore to add this brief word in that connection in order to link up with what has already been said, and to lead on to the message.

Perhaps the most impressive and forceful way in which we can do this is to quote some words in a book just published by Dr. F. F. Bruce (whose spiritual scholarship will not find much dispute).

Under the heading 'Paul's World Significance' Dr. Bruce writes:—

'Paul is one of the most significant figures in the history of civilization. To him, far more than to any other man, Christianity owes the direction which it took in the first generation after the death and resurrection of Jesus. It is interesting at times to speculate on the might-have-beens of history. What might have been the course of Christianity had Paul never become a Christian? Would it have remained one among several movements within the frontiers of Judaism? Would it have remained a predominantly Asian religion, like other movements which originated in the same continent? So we might go on, asking questions whose only value is to emphasize the significance of the life and work of

Paul . . . if it is asked how a faith which arose in Asia should have come to be so universally associated with European civilization (for this purpose 'European' includes 'American'), the answer to the question must be sought in the life and activity of Paul . . . Since Christianity began as a movement within the commonwealth of Israel, how is it that, less than a century after its inception, it presented the appearance of a mainly Gentile faith? The answer to this question too lies in the effectiveness of the ministry of Paul . . . and so on.

If all this, and much more, as to Paul's significance is right, then an inclusive question arises; to what does this particular significance relate? The answer that Paul would give, and his writings provide, is found in the phrase in which he embodied the purpose of his calling—"the stewardship of the mystery". We must therefore proceed at once to the consideration of what is meant by

"THE MYSTERY"

It is not sufficient to say that 'mystery' means 'secret', something hidden, and later disclosed. We must explain what that mystery was, and is.

There are two main aspects of this Divine mystery.

One, and the first, relates to the *Eternal Purpose*; i.e., that which lay at the heart of the counsels of the Godhead before time and before creation.

The other relates to the fore-knowledge which took in all the contingencies of time and human history, and stored up in secret *how* that history and those contingencies would be met, and their problems resolved.

We have dealt with the former of these two aspects in 'Horizoned by Christ', and in Vol. I of the original *Stewardship of the Mystery*. It is with the latter that we are mainly concerned now, although it will embrace the former.

Within the compass of the contingencies of history we are confronted with the great disruptive movement revealed in the Bible and so apparent in experience. This is shown to have had two phases; one before creation (of this present world), the other after.

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THE FIRST DISRUPTION

There is enough in the Bible to inform us that things were not always as they are now. Scripture indicates that there was an undefined period in which a state of perfect accord and harmony existed in the universe. Heaven and earth were in holy happy and joyous symphony. Job speaks of a time "when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job xxxviii. 7). This is said to have followed the "fastening of the foundations and the laying of the cornerstone of the earth".

In the Book of Proverbs—the book so largely the fruit of a special Divine gift of wisdom and knowledge—Wisdom is personified, as of a *He* eternally existent, and that He is spoken of as "rejoicing in his habitable earth", and saying, "my delights were with the sons of men" (Prov. viii. 31).

There is a little—but immensely significant—prefix to the great activities of God in the reverting to the blessed and holy state ; ; it is the prefix *Re*. Its meaning is 'again'. It has numerous compounds, as any dictionary will show, but the greatest words in God's reactions have this prefix:—*Re*-demption ; *re*-conciliation ; *re*-storation ; *re*-cover ; *re*-generation ; *re*-new ; *re*-plenish ; *re*-turn, etc. All this means a re-turn to a state which has been lost.

We ask then: How did this disruption take place and what were—and are—the factors accounting for it?

It is fairly generally agreed by Bible students, and it is borne out by the geological strata of the earth's crust, that this world existed long before the recreation account in Genesis. It is also believed that the darkness, chaos, barrenness, and death to which that book introduces itself was the result of some terrible and devastating event. There are not lacking indications that this was a judgment of God upon a régime which had—by its iniquity and rebellion—passed beyond recovery. Not only are there pointers to this as to that dateless past ; there are two other things which bear upon it. One is God's attitude toward and commandment concerning such people as the Canaanites. Utter extermination without a remnant or residue was God's edict because of the extremity of their 'abominations'. The other thing is that a time is declared to be coming (probably when the redeemed have been lifted away) when, to quote the actual words, "the day of the Lord will come . . . in the which the heavens shall pass away with a

great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved . . . But, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (II Peter iii. 10 – 13). (We in this atomic age can understand this language better than our fathers, and what a testimony to inspiration it is that the manner of "the end of all things" is so described many hundreds of years before the atomic age.)

In the three connections there is a reflection upon the inclusive cause of the cosmic judgment ; it is in Peter's words—"wherein dwelleth righteousness". Unrighteousness carried to its limit means devastation and ruin. Unrighteousness in its essence is, not ceding and giving to God His rights ; this is frequently called "iniquity", and the root of that work is rebellion. That last word—rebellion—brings us immediately to the answer to our question above.

WHENCE THIS UNIVERSAL DISCORD ?

For answer we turn to Ezekiel's prophecy (xxviii. 1 – 10). First the prophet speaks of the Lord's judgment upon the King of Tyre. Then he is carried back into a realm and a position which call for language and description which could never be limited to that king. Through the King of Tyre, and through certain characteristics of his there looms into view the greater one who rules and inspires him.

This greater one is spoken of as "the anointed cherub that covereth" ; "full of wisdom and perfect in beauty" ; dwelling in the garden of God, bedecked and adorned with beautiful and costly gems. As the "anointed cherub which covereth", he seems to have had some position of special privilege, honour, and responsibility in relation to the throne. He "walked up and down amidst the stones of fire". No *man* ever held such a position. He was Lucifer, the light-bearer.

But he was created and entrusted. He was neither the Creator nor the source, but he held everything by trust and by dependence.

Then the scene changes and a dark shadow enters the realm of glory. "Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness". Conceit is always followed by self-assertion. Sooner or later, it will come out and show itself in conduct. It will rebel against authority ; it will resent equality ; it will move—perhaps sullenly at first, gathering

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

strength—toward an open revolt and rebellion. It will seek followers and supporters, until the “I will” becomes a set course. “I will ascend”; “I will exalt my throne”; “I will sit upon the mount”; “I will be”. This then is the source and spring of iniquity, and its essence is pride of heart. “Thy heart was lifted up”. Out of this came independent action.

In the meantime many have been defiled and have formed an alliance with this erstwhile beautiful and trusted one. “The angels which kept not their first estate” (Jude 6; II Peter ii. 4).

Thus we see this rift as having taken place—according to Luke x. 17, 18—in Heaven, and the first great schism having taken place there. There is no place too sacred and holy for the spirit of pride and self-will to invade, corrupt, and hurt. If this could happen there, can we expect that anything here will escape the attack? No, nothing ever has escaped it!

But there is the reaction of God. His answer to “I will ascend” is “*thou shalt* be brought down to hell”. Hell is banishment from the presence of God and loss of all Divine privilege.

The next phase and stage of this course is well known. It may be that in some way Lucifer had a special relationship to this earth, and with his rebellion he infected the previous creation, and was “cast out”. This may largely be deducted from certain Scriptures. A judgment follows a rebellion, and out of the death, the God of Resurrection moved to “make all things new”. There we have the account in Genesis.

But the Adversary has not given up. The re-

newed earth has been placed under the ‘dominion’ of the ‘First Adam’. Into this domain Satan intrudes and—was it to regain his own *lost* dominion?—he makes a bid for it and succeeds. He has found his accomplice and has captured the power of human reproduction with the constituent of rebellion introduced into it. Even Jesus, the rightful Lord will—*before His Cross*—call Satan “the prince of this world” and will not,—*at the time*—dispute the Devil’s statement that “the kingdoms of the world . . . and the glory of them . . . hath been delivered unto me”. The Cross will settle that, but that comes later.

So, we have the repercussion of the heavenly discord in this world.

All division, confusion, disruption, conflicting elements, derive from this twofold primal disruption and disorder. There is now only one legitimate antagonism; it is between light and darkness, truth and falsehood, life and death, righteousness and unrighteousness. It is impressive that at the beginning of the Bible we have this unlawful bid for pre-eminence resulting in division and discord, and so near the end—in John’s third letter—the man who has more to say about love than anyone else, turns with vehement wrath and fiery threatening against “Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence”, and thereby is causing divisions.

Here is the point at which, for the moment, we must break off, for it is here that God’s ‘secret’, His ‘mystery’, is kept in reserve, firstly, to be revealed; secondly, to call for alliance; and finally, to settle the whole issue.

(to be continued)

“GOD MEANT IT”

“*And as for you, ye meant it for evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive*” (Gen. 1. 20).

ON the death of Jacob, Joseph’s brothers, conscious of all the wickedness which they had planned and performed against him, feared the just retribution which they imagined had only been postponed out of deference to their old father. They knew what they deserved, but they came to ask the great Joseph to spare them, still counting on the wishes of their dead father to protect them from vengeance. Joseph had no intention of ignoring their guilt, a guilt for which there

seemed to be no extenuating circumstances. “Ye meant evil against me”, he said. But he did not look on that as his business, or his father’s; that was God’s concern. He was content to leave it with Him. There is, however, another fact which emerges from what has happened, and that is the supreme government of God. “Ye meant it for evil . . . but God meant it for good”. God meant it! What an amazing disclosure of the mentality of a man of faith! Looking back over all his trials and suffering, Joseph was able to affirm, “God meant it”!

It is very hard for many people to understand how God can permit evil. The great mass of

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humanity finds it impossible to admit that an all-powerful God can do so. Many of the Lord's true children complain or repine because even they cannot accept such a possibility. The man of faith accepts this, and goes far beyond it. For Joseph, it was not merely a question of what God permitted to happen, but that there was a Divine intention which operated through all the schemings and bad deeds of his brothers. He saw God as the ultimate explanation of all his experiences. In deep inward experiences with the Lord, he had learned to know something of God's wisdom and power, so much so that he could affirm with the strongest conviction that all the time God had known what He was doing, and that the mind which had triumphed was not the evil mind of men but the perfect mind of God.

THE GREATNESS OF GOD

It really depends on our conception of the greatness of our God. The Bible is given us as instruction about this, and is full of stories of men like Joseph, who have had to undergo much hardship and injustice, without at the time being able to understand why things had to happen as they did. In a painful school these men had to learn the truth of the saying that we must either trust God for all or else not at all. There is no halfway position for the believer. Let Joseph reconsider all the injustice, and all the perplexity of what had seemed like cruel fate; let his brothers rightly confess the spiteful devilishness of their own behaviour; but when all is considered, the final verdict must be that God meant it. How much Joseph was able to believe this during the actual time of the trials, we do not know. But whenever he did so rest in the absolute sovereignty of God, he was proved in the end to have been right. And if in darker moods he doubted this fact, he now had reason to realise how wrong he had been. All through the long anguish God had overruled to produce His own results. Whatever other people meant, the thing which mattered was the Divine intention.

This conception of God's absolute sovereignty is everywhere maintained in the Bible. Joseph was but one of many. Perhaps the outstanding figure of the Old Testament is Job, whose strange and bewildering calamities which came from every quarter, were found in the end to have been part of a Divine pattern. He, too, could look back and understand that God had meant it all. But there were times when he was able to affirm this, even

in the darkness and the bitterness of his great sufferings. This was faith, indeed, to look beyond all second causes and rejoice in the perfect power of God.

The obvious example of this principle in the New Testament is the apostle Paul. It may well be that in his hours of great stress he was tempted to doubt the words which he himself had written to the Roman Christians that God makes everything to work together for good for those involved in His eternal purpose: but he was wrong if he doubted. The verdict of history on all which he endured is that great value for God came out of every trial. God meant it!

Above all, this great principle is proved in the life and sufferings of our Lord Jesus. This, in effect, was the triumphant comment which the apostles were able publicly to proclaim concerning His crucifixion. God meant it! Evil it certainly was, and so it was intended to be. These were no accidents, these were the diabolically planned actions of bad men, but all this was God's way of fulfilling the supreme purpose of His wisdom and goodness. There can be no doubt about the injustice and wickedness of the acts which led to His crucifixion. It is important, though, never to lose sight of the supreme greatness of God. The heart of the Lord Jesus was sustained by the assurance that His living Father was on the throne of the universe, not merely permitting what was happening, but in some strange way working through it all. In a far greater way than was true of Joseph, God sent the Lord Jesus into a wicked, devil-ruled world for the express purpose of "saving much people alive". Yes, God knows what He is doing, even in our case, and even when it seems most impossible to understand.

We shall get value from Joseph's words and from his story if we can acquire a deeper and more practical conviction of the greatness of His God and ours. The moment we become preoccupied with happenings, with other people's intentions and actions, with perception of Satanic plots and activities, we lose the radiance of triumphant faith. Our discernment may be correct, we may even detect depths of evil subtlety which is hidden from most, but we must beware of seeing anything out of relationship with the absolute sovereignty of God. "Ye meant it . . ." but who are you? The important fact is that "God meant it". We have a great God, and we need constant reminders of how very great He is. God's people are continually beset by happenings which are calculated to damp or quench their faith. In this sense we are all

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Josephs. However humble our gift, we all have the same objective which the Lord means to realise through us. We must believe that He is well able to do it. If we resent what is happening to us, then naturally we are doubting His omnipotence. Our sufferings are not merely permitted by the Lord, tolerated for a time so that in the end He can rescue us from them, but they have a purpose to fulfil. God means it!

THE WISDOM OF GOD

To say that God meant something is to pay tribute not only to His power but to His wisdom. Joseph's story is a wonderful example of the working of this wisdom. Wisdom must, of course, be based on knowledge. Nothing escapes the knowledge of God. He knew Joseph's possibilities and He also knew Joseph's weaknesses. He knew what the requirement would be at the time of famine, and He knew how each experience could make Joseph able to measure up to such requirements. He knew the state of affairs in Jacob's family, He knew the plottings of the evil sons, He knew the character of Potiphar's wife, as well as of everybody else involved. There is nothing that God does not fully know.

Wisdom, however, is more than mere knowledge; it is the ability to apply knowledge usefully. So we see that God was able to take hold of all these factors, not just to permit the good forces to do their work and to restrain and veto the bad forces, but to make full use of every element, bad as well as good. Let us make no mistake about it, there are many counsels of evil against the Lord's people. There is an evil mind which 'means' all that happens, and intends to use it for the destruction of God's purposes. A lesser wisdom than the Divine would feel impelled to forbid, to circumvent or to resist the outworking of these hellish plans. It is a fact that often God's people try to do this themselves, or cry unceasingly to the Lord that He may do it. So it is that prayers often seem to lie unanswered. For we are being handled by a wisdom which is perfect, a wisdom which can achieve what it means by taking hold of things and people which are meant for evil and making them work together for good.

The Lord does not share His wisdom with men, not even with the most devoted of His servants. There is no hint that Joseph knew why the various difficulties were permitted in his life. To him the whole painful history must have seemed devoid of any purpose and altogether outside of the wise

management of God. It so often seems like this to us. God will not explain His ways—except to remind us that they are different from and high above ours. We need to be cautious about those who offer themselves as interpreters as to the why and wherefore of all that is happening. What we need is not more explanation, but more faith. Not so much wise counsellors, as deep confidence in the wisdom of God.

It is certain that peace and rest of heart go out when questions and reasonings come in. We can imagine that every time that Joseph, when in the pit or the prison, harboured the thought that this wickedness could not possibly be of God, his heart would lose its quiet peace. "Ye meant it for evil . . ." That, of course, was true. It was a truth calculated to rob him of all his calm of spirit. It was true, but it was only half the truth, and the less important half at that. The other fact was that "God meant it", and He meant it "for good". God's wisdom is always good. And it always has purposes which go far beyond our own personal good. If we can believe this, then we can know the secret of a heart at rest in any circumstances at all.

THE PATIENCE OF GOD

One of the amazing features of Joseph's story is the length of the testing time, and the long delays without any indication of when that end might be expected. Actually when it did come, it came most unexpectedly and with great rapidity. The period of testing for Joseph extended over quite a number of years. Often he must have felt that he could bear no more. He must have wondered how a righteous God could let injustice continue unanswered for so long. We marvel at the patience of such a man of God.

Nevertheless we need most of all to marvel at God's own patience. How easy it was for Him to end the suffering! He is almighty, and at any moment could have intervened to cut short the anguish. Moreover we must remember that God's feelings toward His servants are of very deep love. Jacob loved Joseph in a very special way, but Jacob's love pales into insignificance alongside the love of God. Jacob could not have borne to see his son suffering through all those years. In a sense it was merciful that he thought Joseph to be dead, so that while he personally grieved for him, he knew nothing of his trials and sorrows. But the Lord knew it all. He watched every one of them. Would it be wrong to say that the patience of God was sorely tried? At least from our point of view

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it seems like this. He refrained from lifting a hand to deliver Joseph, though of course He marvelously controlled all the events, for He had patience to wait for the full fruit of all the happenings. This is the patience which we need. So often we try to cut things short. At other times we fret in our helplessness because we cannot do so. God has wisdom in all His patience. He means it for good.

THE GLORY OF GOD

What God meant for Joseph was that he should know something of the Divine glory. So often our idea of glorifying God centres in what we have or are. We want to add to the glory of God and are tempted to imagine that when we grow bigger and bigger God is more and more glorified in us. It does not work out like this.

Joseph did have something which belonged to him, and though it was nothing much in itself it meant a great deal to him ; it was his glory. I speak of his coat of many colours. When, however, he was exalted to the throne and given glory, it had nothing to do with that coat, which had once seemed so desirable and so magnificent to him. No, that had been abandoned, blood-stained and inglorious. When at last he was raised from the prison and given glory, that was something which only God could do, and it was the end which the Lord had had in view from the beginning. He strips us of our own petty glories that we may be fitted to bear His glory. No doubt each incident in Joseph's life, however strange and however unjust and cruel, represented a necessary part of God's working to bring him to ultimate glory. This is what God "means", and for it He takes infinite pains and bears all with infinite patience ; weakening and emptying us that in the end the glory may all be His.

It was from the vantage point of glory that Joseph was able to make his affirmation of faith. He had, in a sense, reached the end, and was in a good position to understand something of the past happenings in his life. We are called on to believe this, even when we have no evidence as yet. It is surely true that whenever we do rise above men and circumstances in such a complete triumph of faith, something of the heavenly glory already finds a place in our hearts.

CO-OPERATION WITH GOD

This brings us to the practical issue of our consideration. Just to say "God meant it" could have

been evidence of nothing more noble than mere fatalism. Let us make no mistake about it, there is all the difference in the world between a fatalist and a vital believer in Divine sovereignty. The story of Joseph gives plenty of evidence of this.

Joseph gives a wonderful example of a man who does not know what God is doing and yet who by faith co-operates with Him at every step of the way. At each phase of his experience, even when perhaps he was most bewildered, Joseph gave God the co-operation which He needs for the fulfilment of His purposes. This co-operation can only come from faith. It does not necessarily entail an understanding of the procedure of things, but it certainly cannot be given unless we are absolutely convinced of God's supreme power. The man who imagines that things have got out of God's hands, that they are not working out as He intended, or that Satan or Satan's agents are really in control, is the man who is not in a position to give the Lord any co-operation at all. That is unbelief. And unbelief is the greatest hindrance we can offer to God's working.

This co-operation is a matter of heart-attitude, of spirit, and means that we go quietly on, cheerfully and faithfully glorifying the Lord where we are, not fretting or praying to be moved somewhere else. This was what Joseph did. In each place where 'fate' or Satan or evil men had put him, he gave his whole heart to the business of seeking to be true to God. And we know that in this "God was with him". When God's time came, Joseph was as surprised as everybody else. He had not planned for this, schemed for it or agitated that it might be. It may be that he was not even praying for it. When he was hastily called from his prison, though, and asked to interpret the dreams, his qualification for what happened was that he had been maintaining his personal walk with God even though he could see no value in doing so. It is true that when exalted to the throne he could declare, "God meant it". This is what the Lord had in mind all the time, and for this He let wicked men and harsh circumstances do their worst. It is also true, though, that Joseph's faith co-operation had alone made it possible. Real faith in Divine sovereignty leaves no place for passivity or carelessness ; such faith makes the strongest demands on active co-operation with the Lord at all times.

There is a sense in which Joseph is not only a type of Christ in His rejection and final glory, but also a type of the people of God. We, too, are called to the throne. In some ways we must pass through the kind of tests and temptations which

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came to Joseph. When the end of the story is told it will be seen that the sufferings and anguish of God's people have been the very means by which He has made them fit to reign with Christ. What often happens to them now is evil, and is intended so to be. "Ye meant it for evil". Nevertheless what is true of Christ and His Cross is to be made true in His people. One day we shall be able to look

back on all that seemed most heartless and unjust, affirming with conviction as well as with wondering worship that God's wisdom and love have been justified. "But God meant it for good." Even now, by faith, let us rejoice in the absolute sovereignty of our God and so co-operate with Him in His great eternal purpose.

H. F.

HORIZONED BY RESURRECTION

Romans i. 4 (I Corinthians xv. 1, 12 - 22, 45 ; II Corinthians v. 14 - 18).

"Declared to be the Son of God with power . . . by the resurrection from the dead."

THE word 'declared' or 'designated' there is the verb *horizo*, i.e., "horizoned the Son by resurrection".

In resurrection Christ is declared or made the horizon or frontier of a new creation (II Cor v. 17).

This is positively stated in I Corinthians xv. 12 - 30, and that chapter or part of the letter should be read in that light.

When we refer—as we so often do—to resurrection, we usually and almost entirely have in mind the idea of power, i.e., "the *power* of his resurrection". It is in this connection that the matter is mainly referred to in the Bible, and essentially so, for it is here that the uniqueness and exceedingness of Divine power is displayed. But there is another aspect which governs the power-factor, it is the character-aspect. Resurrection means a kind of person who comes into being thereby. For the power and life of resurrection to be continually effective the risen ones must correspond to the Risen One in the deepest reality of their being. There is a "like as" in this matter, and a "so also" (Romans vi.).

This brings us to the particular significance of the two Corinthians letters.

The first reveals a painfully disgraceful state of things amongst the Christians there. The word which could rightly cover so much of the first letter is the word 'shame'. The word which is so much in evidence in the second letter is 'glory'. The turning-point is Christ in resurrection. This is the inclusive and predominant thing. Indeed, it would appear that the Apostle brought this very matter forward as the answer and solution to the problem of that shameful state. Note the approach by the Apostle to this situation. It was by

nailing the Corinthian Christians down to the name of Christ.

CHRIST IN RESURRECTION THE GREAT CORRECTIVE

In no letter is the name of Christ so continuously introduced and reiterated as it is in First Corinthians. It occurs no fewer than nine times in the first nine verses.

This gives the name a comprehensive application to all that needs dealing with, but it can be instanced in a particular way in relation to the making of names into rallying points, e.g., "I am of Paul", "I am of Apollos", "I am of Peter", "I am of Christ" (in a partisan and wrong sense).

Paul will have none of it as to his own name, and, while not being rude and discourteous to his brother apostles, he equally rejects their names as focal points of partisanship. It is important to note that Paul designates the Gospel as the Gospel of the Resurrection (I Corinthians xv. 1).

To understand the Gospel is to understand the meaning of resurrection as that of "a new creation". The great basic statement is: "If any man be in Christ, there is a new creation", but being "in Christ" means being in Christ risen, in resurrection, and Christ in resurrection implies or postulates a new order of man—"not after the flesh, but after the spirit" (II Corinthians v. 14).

This is why the Bible is a book of people.

THE BIBLE A BOOK OF PEOPLE

The people imply living experience; not doctrines, forms, orders, systems, techniques, things. All these can be found in the Bible, but *there* they have to do with living people. God is not interested in things in themselves; e.g., places, names, systems, etc. He may use them as instruments, and then—as history overwhelmingly shows—He may

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discard them: "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living".

If God raises up something to serve a special purpose, and that purpose is discarded, lost, or abandoned, the instrument may have a measure of life for a time, like the branch severed from the tree, but its days are numbered, its continuance is in increasing limitation; man will be put to it to keep it going. Its remaining tenure will be the history of human effort to maintain it. The world has very many examples of such things, places, and names, which once had a name rightly and truly for life, power, faithfulness, but to-day are either merely shells or organizations. Like the churches in Asia their great former testimony has gone. The Lord leaves to its own resources that which ceases to fulfil the purpose for which He exercised His power of resurrection. God has but one interest, it is His Son in resurrection: its *meaning*, and then its power.

THE TWO RACIAL MEN

The two Corinthian Letters circle around two representative men, or two types of men.

1. The Natural Man.

This is the man on the pre-Calvary side, conditionally. This man—as Paul shows—may be *positionally* in Christ, but *conditionally* he is not living according to his *position*. He is a contradiction to the meaning of resurrection in Christ. This failure to understand the meaning of resurrection-ground is drawn in dark lines in First Corinthians. The word 'natural' is 'soulical'—the man of soul. The soul is the human *ego*, or selfhood. This man is ego-centric, or self-centred.

Paul focuses this condition very largely upon the 'mind' or 'judgment' (I Cor. i. 10; ii. 16).

This is connected with:

(a). The things of the Spirit of God", and it is categorically stated that this man, not living in the meaning of resurrection, is totally incapacitated as to understanding or 'judging' those things.

(b). Fellow believers.

This man only judges others after the flesh. His estimate of them and his conduct toward them is a wholly uncrucified one; he judges as other men do.

(c). The World.

The standards of the natural man are those of worldly-wisdom, the wisdom of the world, and it

can be so false as to have dictated the crucifying of the Son of God.

Likewise the natural man's ideas of power are entirely those of this world; the idea that human strength, strength of soul, will achieve Divine ends. This is wholly false and deceptive, and Paul has no compromise with this false idea. He gives a large place to weakness and dependence upon God. He knows that God has said: "By strength shall no man prevail", and, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord . . .". He also knows the terrible history of the Satan-energized human soul and how Satan originally made his link with man by means of his ego. Egoism brought Satan's downfall, and is always his hallmark upon his instruments. Power-politics is the mark of this world's policies, and is proving to be its doom.

(d). The Lord's Servants.

The natural man as in Corinth appraises the Lord's servants wholly on human and natural grounds. "Paul", "Apollos", "Cephas" are not appraised for their spiritual value, but because of human likes or dislikes, approval or disapproval. Paul had a bad time with these natural-minded Christians because they allowed any features which they did not like in him to eclipse his great spiritual values. This is a common fault of Christians who do not know what it means to be "raised together with Christ", although they may be well-versed in the doctrine, as such.

The ruination of the Church to-day lies largely in this very direction. Christendom at large, and many a local community of Christians is wrecked and ruined by this failure to make as much as is possible of the spiritual values present, and to know as much after the spirit as can be.

This brings us to the opposite.

The spiritual man, or the man after the Spirit, is the man who is truly on the after-side of the Cross. Not ego-centric, but Christ-centred is this man. Here we are at the very heart and core—not only of the two Corinthian letters, but—of Christianity itself.

CHRIST IN RESURRECTION— A SPIRITUAL ORDER

Upon this fact and its meaning the dispensations completely changed. If Christianity to-day is not what it was right at the beginning; if its impact and effectiveness is less than in its first decades; if it is lacking in authority, so that the world no

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longer regards it as something to be reckoned with seriously, the loss can be largely traced to failure to recognize the nature of this dispensational change. The tragedy of the Corinthian lapse has, *for the same reason*, become the tragedy of so much Christianity to-day. The error of the Corinthians was to exalt the natural man instead of to recognize that he was displaced. The natural man may be learned,—as the world calls him—‘wise’. He may be in power. He may be successful. He may have great natural ability, influence, and prestige. But with all, he *may* not account for anything spiritually.

This crisis change did not come first to be intimated by Paul. Jesus Himself was always speaking of a coming change in what He called “that day”, and He clearly and emphatically indicated what the change would be. It was implicit and explicit in His words to Nicodemus in John iii, but in John iv, to the woman of Samaria, He was most definitely explicit. Said He, “. . . the hour cometh, and now is, when, neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem shall men worship God. God is spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

“Neither . . . nor . . . but” marks a transition and a change. To Nicodemus it was “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit”. To Sychar’s woman it was “in spirit and in truth”.

The “neither . . . nor” indicated the past system of fixed localities and orders, which is now set aside. The “hour” which has come is the day of the Spirit. The “whosoever” of John iii. 16 in relation to salvation leads on to the “wheresoever” of Matt. xviii. Neither Israel nor Jerusalem exclusively, but “whosoever” and “wheresoever” govern the new day of the Spirit.

With the resurrection of Christ and Pentecost a new spiritual order was constituted, an order of essentially spiritual men and women, with spiritual capacities, consciousness, and abilities. The embargo resting upon the natural man is removed, and “he that is spiritual judgeth all things”. The darkened mind and understanding of Corinthians iv 20–24 has been released and enlightened; “God, who said, Let light be, has shined into our hearts . . .”: the “veil” (chaps. iii; iv. 6) has been taken away; the “second man”, the “last Adam”, “the life-giving spirit” has given birth to a “new creation” race of men.

Behind the Corinthian conditions we see the incursion of the results of the first Adam’s fall. Cosmic and earthly strife, confusion, dissension, rivalries, factions, enmities—these are Satanic in

origin, and Satan ever pursues his original quest for an open door by the soul of man to reproduce these evil works. They have become so elemental, constitutional, inherent in human nature that “Christ crucified” and “Christ risen” is the only answer.

This represents the overthrow of an entire régime, to make way for an utterly new one.

The character of this new order is

THE ABSOLUTE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

This is implied in I Cor. ii. 10–16, where we have “Spirit” five times: “spiritual” and “spiritually” four times. It is definitely stated in II Cor. ii. 14–iii. 17, 18 margin.

Christ had taught it, i.e., John iii. 8; John xvi. “Acts” demonstrated it, chapter ii; x. 17.

Paul was a supreme example of it. His teaching concerning the Spirit issued from what had happened to him. He called this event in his history a being “apprehended”. He conceived that he had been brought under arrest, perhaps like a fugitive slave. Hence he continued to speak of himself as “the bondsman of Jesus Christ”, and as “bearing in his body, branded, the marks of Jesus Christ”.

It was for Paul, as for the whole Church, a meeting with and union with Christ *risen* that led to the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit always waits upon such an apprehension. Resurrection is the Spirit’s work, and is His ground of every new beginning. There may have been all the teaching of Jesus: there may have been the commission: there may have been the work of the Cross, so far as Christ was concerned; but all was in suspense. Forty days marked a period of inaugurating and establishing a new spiritual régime. Everything was to be new and different. In their apprehension and knowledge of Christ: in their relationship to one another: in their influence in the world: in their authority among men, and so on; the resurrection constituted an entirely new horizon.

We shall later see what this meant as to the individuals to whom Jesus appeared during that period, for it is in them that the effect of this changed relationship is so clearly seen.

There is a sense in which—in most ways—the end of the phase of Christ’s earthly life has to have ‘failure’ written over it—failure in the world: failure in Israel: failure with His disciples: the failure of His teaching: the failure of His works and of His claims. These latter failures especially were due to the natural and earthly level or horizon within which they were living. It was in

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themselves that He was "straitened"; their spiritual bondage and mental limitation. The Forty Days were not only the evidence of His resurrection, but of the change which the resurrection makes.

This, as we have said, is demonstrated in the cases of His contact during that period.

In our next chapter we shall take up these instances.

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

MIRACLE ON THE MOUNTAIN

CAPTAIN TRENCHARD hobbled down the gangplank of the hospital ship at Southampton, dragging one leg painfully behind the other. He was a casualty from the Boer War. The Boer bullet which had injured his lung and nearly killed him, had also hit his spine, leaving him half paralysed from the waist down.

That was sixty years ago, when medical science could give no help in such a case. The doctors could do nothing for his spine injury, and were by no means sure that they could save his life. As soon as it was possible, they arranged for him to go to Switzerland, in the hope that his serious lung trouble could be helped.

He arrived at St. Moritz on the last Sunday of December 1900, and soon began to look around, struggling along with the help of two sticks. When he sat down by the lakeside he watched four men skilfully pushing heavy objects like flat-bottomed boulders, which twirled and skidded over the glassy surface. On the same lake skaters were racing around with a grace and speed which brought a stab of envy to his heart. Here was he, a young man of 27, but he could never enjoy curling or skating.

He struggled lamely up a nearby slope, only to find fresh cause for regret as he passed an instructor with his pupils on skis. Alas! that also was not for him. He was a hopeless cripple, doomed to drag himself around on sticks for the rest of his life.

As he moved sadly on he caught sight of a sudden flash down the side of the mountain opposite. Like an arrow shot from an invisible bow, a man skimmed down on a toboggan. A toboggan! Why not? Even a lame man can lie on a toboggan. All day long he kept wondering if he could do it. Was it possible that life might still have some interest for him after all? Was this a sport which even a cripple could enjoy?

Two mornings later he managed to get to the top of the run. He hid his sticks in the snow, boldly hired a toboggan, and was soon racing down

the mountainside. How he did it he never knew, but he reached the bottom without a spill, having travelled faster than he had ever done before.

Urged on by his first success, as well as by the kindly chaff of new friends he had made at his hotel, he soon decided to have a serious try to go down the famous Cresta Run. For him to decide was to act, so one morning he began to whizz down the Cresta, almost coming to grief at the sharp right-hand turn called Battledore. Somehow he managed to keep on, but the toboggan was running away with him, making it impossible for him to round the equally sharp left-hand turn of Shuttlecock. It was he who became the shuttlecock, for he missed the turn, was thrown off and went flying into the air. His body hit the side of the hill two or three times before at last he came to rest in a snowdrift nearly thirty feet below.

Kind helpers hurried to him to lift him up, but what was their surprise when he suddenly pushed them all aside, shouting with excitement that he now had full use of his legs. He could walk unaided! Something wrong in his spine must have clicked back into place. His fall had cured him.

Of course he was stiff, and not without some pain, but soon he was able to walk and run like any other man. His return to active life was little short of a miracle. The War Office had already listed him as totally disabled, and found it hard to change their opinion. But by May 1901 he was back on a troopship bound for South Africa with another fifty years of very active life before him.

By the time he became the honoured founder and Marshal of the Royal Air Force, Lord Trenchard had taken many more risks and had many other falls. but it was this one which changed his whole life. It saved him from being a totally disabled cripple, and made it possible for him to become one of the nation's great leaders.

It was a miracle of God's goodness. Unhappily Lord Trenchard was not the man to recognize it as such, but at least his story has a lesson for all Christian boys and girls. In fact it has two lessons.

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

The first is that we should not spend our time moaning about what we cannot do, but get on with what we can. Trenchard could neither skate nor ski. Very well! He did not pity himself, nor ask others for pity, but looked round to see if there was something that he could do. And this, strangely enough, opened the way for him to do everything else. If a man without faith could do what he did, how much more should we who trust God learn to venture out by faith in Him. There is all the difference between those who waste time regretting what they cannot do, and those who cheerfully look round to find new ways of trusting God and launching out in faith.

The second message of this story is the re-

minder of how seeming calamities can turn out to be great blessings. There is a verse in the Bible about this: "the Lord thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the Lord thy God loved thee" (Deut. 23. 5).

Suppose, like Trenchard, we fall into trouble. Suppose that things happen to us which seem, as it were, to toss us into the air and to bruise us on the hillside! The world will say that this is a curse. But God, in His love, can turn the curse into a blessing. He can give us new strength for life and new opportunities of service out of the very troubles which meet us. He will do this, but our part is to trust Him and to venture out in faith.

H. F.

THE LORD'S OVERCOMERS

THE Battle of the Ages is upon us. The Word of God warns us that the Last Days are to be times of peril and conflict, when God will have need of warriors to fight the good fight of faith. The one overwhelming impression that the present aspect of modern missions has produced upon my own mind, after forty years of the careful study of missions at large, is that of combined and desperate opposition; that the powers of earth and hell are arrayed against CHRIST and His Gospel, determined to defeat the project and purpose of a world's evangelization; and that consequently nothing is so necessary, in a true missionary of the Cross, as to know and wield the secrets of the overcoming life.

The book of the Revelation—the last in the Word of God—resounds, from beginning to end, with the tramp of contending hosts and the noise of battle—the signs of a conflict with colossal foes, on a gigantic scale—a fight with all hostile powers, human and demonic, combined. There is more frequent portrayal of such battle scenes in the Apocalypse than in any other book in the Bible, but there is also more about 'overcoming' than in any other.

The word 'overcome' occurs thirteen times, and always at critical points in that final and wonderful prophetic vision. In the second and third chapters alone it is found eight times—in fact, at the conclusion of every one of the epistles to the seven churches. Then, again, in Ch. xii. 11, where the great conflict is depicted with the Arch-Adversary, the Accuser of the brethren, he is represented as overcome by the Saints, overcome "by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony", and by their absolute self-oblivion, in that "they loved not their lives even unto the death."

Then again, in Ch. xvii. 14, we have another vision of conflict—in this case a tremendous battle with the ten kings, that give their support to the beast; they are overcome by the Lamb; and we are significantly told that "they that are with him"—His companions in fight—"are called, and chosen, and faithful."

Looking at these three instances in which conflict and victory are put so prominently before us in this remarkable book, we notice that in every case there is a distinct climax. In the seven epistles, and the promises "to him that overcometh", there is a regular historical order in the figures used. They follow the progress of events from the Tree of Life, in Eden, through the second death of the Fall, the desert journey with its manna, the lifted rod of Moses, the prevailing against Amalek, the white robes of priesthood, the erection of pillars in the temple, and, finally, Solomon's ascent to his own throne, after having occupied, jointly with his father, his seat of sovereignty for a period—the golden age of the Hebrews.

What this historic order means we cannot discern, unless it is to teach us that the rewards of an overcoming life cover the whole range of blessing at God's disposal. For mark how this history, reaching from the Fall to the final establishment of the Kingdom under Solomon, typically suggests the whole progress of redeemed man, from the forfeiture of innocence and fellowship with God, in the Fall, to the very close of the Mediatorial Reign of CHRIST. It is as though God had said that, to those who are truly the victors in this war of the ages, He will give every reward within His gift. He will welcome to His own Paradise, share with them His

own deathless Life, feed them with celestial banquets, lift them to seats of authority, and put into their hands sceptres of rule; clothe them in the white robes of holiness, and give them a permanent place in His Eternal Temple; nay, exalt them to *joint sovereignty with Himself*.

The fact is that from such a prospect of promised blessing, we simply shrink back, overwhelmed with a glory too great for mortal eyes. It is rather a dream, or a poem, than a possible reality or actuality. But, after making all allowance for the glamour of highly-wrought oriental symbolism, it still remains true, that, behind all this magnificent figurative dress, there stands a superb body of promise addressed to him that overcometh.

TWO ASPECTS OF THE WAR

The other two passages, as we have already seen, are connected with two great conflicts: one with the ten kings that give their power and strength to the Apocalyptic Beast, and who make war with the Lamb, and are by Him overcome. But there are those who are "with him" in His war and victory, and they are distinguished by three significant titles—"the *called*, and *chosen*, and *faithful*."

If we turn to the other passage, there is an even more gigantic conflict; it is with the great Adversary himself, the Accuser of the Saints; he is cast down, and the overcomers are the very Saints he accuses. And, again, we have a threefold secret of this overcoming power: it is by the Blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and it is especially added as the climax of all, that "they loved not their lives unto the death." Here, again, is a progressive order. They were, first, identified with the Sacrifice of Calvary, but so fully as to become witnesses to His Grace, and then their witness was carried even to the point of martyrdom.

As we put these two passages side by side, we are further struck by their resemblance and correspondence. Perhaps there is a reason for this threefold arrangement in each case. The "called" correspond to those who overcome through the Blood; the "chosen" to those who to the Blood add their own witness; and the "faithful" to those who love not their lives even unto death. In other words we have here *the degrees of overcoming life and power*. When we hear and obey the simple gospel call, we reach the first stage of the overcoming life; in the dying Lamb we overcome Death and Judgment. When we take our place as witnesses, we are among those chosen by God to the peculiar privilege of testifying to others of sav-

ing grace; but, when we reach the grand height of self-effacement, and life itself becomes a sacrifice; when unselfish devotion to our Master and to souls has led to absorption in Him, so that even life itself is surrendered for His sake, we prove ourselves to be among those who are found faithful, trustworthy—the imperial bodyguard. We have now advanced from the mere position of recruits enlisted under the Lord's banner, or even captains entrusted with the command of companies, and are brought into sacred nearness to the very Victor Himself, as His main reliance.

As nearly as we can discern the Spirit's meaning, there are three stages of victory: the *judicial*, the *experimental*, and the *sacrificial*—the first, wholly dependent on our identification with the Lord Jesus as the great Overcomer (Rom. viii. 37); the second, adding the testimony of the believer's own experience after testing for himself the power of the Blood and the Word, and the Spirit, and the third, the further power which comes from a still closer identification with the Saviour of the world, in like Him sacrificing self, even to the point of surrender of life, for His sake. As to the first, *we are in Him*, and so *His victory is ours*; as to the second, *we are His witnesses*, and so our word, like His, has power. We speak that we do know. As to the third, *we meet the Adversary* with utter fearlessness and contempt of all his threats and wiles, for we love not life. As in our witness, we meet him as liar by testifying to the truth, here we meet him as murderer by willingness to die, and it is only when we are ready to bleed that we are able to bless.

I count the three things, thus suggested to us in this brief sentence, as among the foremost truths of all Revelation . . .

THE JUDICIAL OVERCOMING

Let us dwell for a little on each of these stages of overcoming power. In the first place, the judicial overcoming, That is a victory found *in identity with the bleeding Lamb*; an overcoming entirely independent of any activity, sacrifice, or even testimony upon our part, due purely and simply to the overcoming power of His atoning Blood. Faith makes us one with our Lord Jesus Christ, so that whatever He accomplished is *potentially and judicially our achievement*, and its whole benefit is reckoned to our account. The moment that any penitent sinner believes and accepts the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour, he is entitled to, and made a sharer in, all the merits of His holy obedience and all the conquest involved in His vicarious death and resurrec-

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tion. All His overcomings are reckoned absolutely to every believer's account. In His cross we also, in Him, conquered death, and hell, and the devil. In His resurrection we rose, in His ascension we mounted to the heavenlies, and in His session at the right hand of God we sat down in the place of power and authority. These are the privileges alike of all the called, of all believers. There is an immediate and unconditional reckoning of victory to those who penitently and believingly turn to the Lamb and enlist under the banner of God.

THE EXPERIMENTAL WORD OF WITNESS

But look further, for there is another secret and stage of overcoming power: "and by the word of their testimony". What is testimony? It is witness, and the word witness is from the Saxon word *Witan*—to *know*. A witness is simply one who tells what he knows. But observe, one must know, in order to witness; and therefore our testimony for our blessed Lord can be powerful only when, and so far as, our experience is genuine and deep. The first lesson of all overcoming power is learned when the disciple understands the effect of his judicial standing, and identity with the bleeding but overcoming Lamb. But our witness is to be added to the power of the blood of Christ if we are to know all the higher achievements of the overcoming life; and, because *all witness is powerless when it goes beyond knowledge*, there must be a profound and genuine experience of Divine things; a cultivation of the highest possibilities of godliness if the witness is to be really effective and powerful. There must be a *man* behind the *message*—a saint behind the service. There must be the nameless power that comes from a true fellowship with God. Otherwise, our witness is a mere formal, heartless repetition of the Gospel tidings, and the dialect of the overcoming life . . .

It would seem that great emphasis is laid in the Word of God on witnessing, as having an influence on the *witnesser*, on the *God* witnessed for, and the *man* witnessed to. God ordains that he who testifies to a truth shall get the blessing both of knowing more to witness to, and being stronger for witnessing. It is a law of the spiritual realm that the tongue shall both *express* and *impress* truth; that speech shall give vent to thought and conviction, and react on both; and God gives distinct and supernatural blessing to every one who, so far as light comes, reflects it in utterance. Testimony which expresses, also expands, experience. It tells men the truth, as that truth has become incarnate

in us. It is the truth plus the man behind it. It is the speech of the heart and life, which always carries conviction. And no sooner do we witness to a fact in experience than in some strange way experience so enlarges, that we find we have something more to say. We cannot tell how it is, but to have spoken for Christ is to have gone a step further and higher, and to have got a clearer and fuller view of Christ, and therefore more to witness. This can be accounted for only on the ground of a Divine Communication to the soul . . .

Everyone that goes out to tell the story of Christ at home or abroad finds that every time he speaks for Christ, he knows Christ better. He has something more to say every time he opens his mouth to tell—not what somebody else knows, but what *he* knows—what God has shown *him*, in his own spiritual experience, of the riches and the wonders of His grace.

THE SACRIFICIAL SPIRIT

The third and climacteric secret and stage of overcoming is the *sacrificial*—they "loved not their lives, even unto the death". That marks the final and most advanced conquest; it is found in the sacrificial spirit. When you carry your readiness to witness to Christ to such an extent, that you care nothing even for your own life, in comparison, you may boldly defy the devil to do his worst. The thing that men value most is life, for it is life that gives value to everything else; and, when the great Adversary threatens not only your reputation, not only your standing among men, not only your physical ease and domestic comfort, and social influence, but your very life itself; and you can boldly look him in the face and say, 'I love not my life even unto death', you have come to the high position where the final secret of overcoming power is learned and possessed. You have come now where you "fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in your own flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church." And that is the grandest possible elevation upon which any man or woman can stand, in any work of any kind, or mission for God; whether in the slums or the pulpits of a great city; whether on the very borders of civilization or the home-land where the opposing tides of virtue and vice, government and anarchy, meet and collide; or at the very ends of the earth, in the habitations of darkness and cruelty.

As to sacrifice, that is the law of service of the highest sort. The seed must die, as a seed, to live as a crop. And nothing do we cling to as to self

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and life. Much even of our spiritual life has a great deal of the leaven of self corrupting it; we are seeking self-advantage and self-glory only on a higher level, and of a more refined sort. Nothing is so hard to kill as pride and selfishness. Man is like an onion—layer after layer of self in some form. Strip off self-righteousness, and you still come to self-trust; get beneath this, and you meet self-seeking, and self-pleasing; even when you think these are abandoned, self-will betrays its presence. If this seems stripped off, you find self-defence, and, last of all, self-glory. And when even this seems abandoned, the heart of the human onion—most offensive of all—is the selfish *pride* that boasts at last of being truly humble.

Nothing comes so near to the Christ-like idea and ideal as utter self-abnegation and oblivion. And, because our Lord had reached this sublime height, He could say, "The prince of this world cometh, and *hath nothing in me.*"

And notice this: Just as surely as any man or woman gets to the point wherein there is the resolute determination to bear a full witness to the truth, and to the Lord Jesus Christ, up to the very limit of experience and knowledge, the devil's devices are defeated, and he is again practically

'judged', and we become 'more than conquerors.'

WHAT IT IS TO BE "MORE THAN CONQUERORS"

I have heard many attempts to explain that famous phrase in the eighth of Romans, but never anything that satisfies me so well as when I read in a book of Dr. Mabie's that, when the devil brought about the death of Christ he practically destroyed himself—the *deicide was suicide*; that is, the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus reacted in judgment upon himself, who had conspired to secure the death of the Lamb of God; that Christ, in dying, and "through death, destroyed him that had the power of death—that is the devil—and delivered those who, through fear of death, were, all their lifetime, subject to bondage."

And so our Lord, *more than conquered* His adversary, He destroyed him. So, when you love not your life even unto death, the very efforts that the devil makes to intimidate you and defeat you, react upon himself in a sort of new judgment. He does not vanquish you, but his own authority, and power, and rule are diminished; and so you become "more than conquerors through him that loved you."

DR. A. T. P.

BROKENNESS AND BLESSING

1. Broken Personality releasing the fragrance of Christ.
2. Broken Purposes leading into larger experiences of God and releasing prayer-power.
3. Broken Plans releasing Christ-life for those for whom the plans were made.
4. Broken Periods releasing the glory of the Father through broken Christ-like lives.

1. BROKEN PERSONALITY RELEASING THE FRAGRANCE OF CHRIST

JACOB AT PENIEL *Gen. xxxii. 24 - 32,*

MARY AT BETHANY *John xii. 1 - 8.*

WE may ask why brokenness? Is not wholeness what we want? The word 'wholeness' has a connection with holiness and health. But wholeness without God means danger and final loss.

'Dark waters blossom white in breaking,
High souls are made in the unmaking.'

(Charles Fox)

And the dark waters in breaking have united with the unseen oxygen, that is why they can re-

flect the glory of the light. Take another illustration. James McConkey purposed to be a lawyer and trained for the Bar. Family bereavement led him to combine study with business. He reached his goal and broke. In the breaking God led him out into a life of full surrender, reflecting the glory of God. In his *God Planned Life* he uses this illustration. A beautiful, very beautiful, stained-glass window in a cathedral was the object of attraction to many tourists. One night an awful storm raged, the whole window frame blew in and the glass smashed in atoms on the floor, and the sorrowful people of the City gathered up the fragments, placed them in a box and removed them to the crypt. One day a stranger came and asked permission to see them and if he might take them away. 'Yes', they said, 'we have no use for them.' Later came a mysterious invitation to some of those city authorities from a well-known artist in stained glass. A curtain was removed in his studio and there was their beautiful window, only *more*, much *more*, beautiful than before—a gift from the artist to take home.

There is brokenness that admits God and

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brokenness that releases Him. In this first lesson we will study both, Ps. li. 17 and Isa. lvii. 15 give the initial step, brokenness that admits God, making it possible for Him to dwell with us with all the adjustment and healing which that involves. To understand God's dealings with *Jacob* at *Peniel* study Genesis xxv. 26 - 34, also chapters xxvii and xxix to xxxi. Remember his very birth was an answer to prayer, and his mother had had a definite answer from God and a revelation of His purpose for Jacob. Yet Jacob had never taken hold of this covenant. He had manoeuvred to get others out of his way, and even to get God into position for the blessing he sought. He engineered life. He sought God's blessing without room for God Himself. The Holy Spirit was doubtless seeking contact with this soul chosen for God's purpose, yet he was only dimly seeking out after it, relying on his own engineering of circumstances to get there. What need for brokenness through contact that God might take His place in Jacob's life! How did this come? Through pressure: the impact of God on his personality. And Jacob finally broke under it and clung: "There wrestled a man with him" (Gen. xxxii. 24). 'A man'! And the man knew where to touch him as he wrestled, just where brokenness would mean blessing. "And he blessed him there". Jacob could not manage God and bring Him into line with his own strong desires, using Him as a barrier against the thing he feared. So at length he clung, broken, to Him the Blessor, and he was blessed. And then Esau fell into line, and the thing Jacob feared melted away. Perhaps the most difficult habit to break in us is the one of managing our own lives to accomplish a purposed end. It must break to admit Him, the Breaker.

To get the second part of our lesson we go to *Mary* at *Bethany* and study her gift in the light of I Cor. xi. 24: "My body broken for you". There was timeliness in her gift. Christ was facing His darkest hour—Mary knew it when others did not, and brought her ointment to anoint Him for His burial. There is a crisis in world history to-day and often *sweetness* is wanted more than strength, sweetness released through broken personalities. How subtly indefinable fragrance is, yet how permeating! I have heard a missionary tell of a fellow-worker of strong character whose life was known to hold sweetest fragrance, but not until her indomitable will broke on the language difficulty did that fragrance fill the house. How much sweetness and fragrance are *we* holding back from God by persisting on the unbroken lines of our own personality? Is personality dearer to us than

Christ? Have we received no commandment from our Father to lay down our lives in brokenness that the sweetness of the indwelling Christ may break forth? (John x, 18 and xiv. 31 and I John iii. 16).

And *where* shall we break the alabaster box of our personality? There is only one central place where that released ointment will mean world-wide blessing—on the head of Christ, who held nothing back from God; that set free, might benefit others. The supreme expression of Christ's love to the Father and to us was His broken body offered up on the Cross, setting free the unspeakable sweetness of His life and love as a fragrance filling the whole world. The same Holy Spirit, who led our Lord to the Cross in full and glad surrender (Heb. ix. 14), will anoint us for this service. Do not the unbroken lines of our personality encase and confine much Christ-sweetness that, set free, would heal and straighten out world-problems as well as church and individual ones? Is not the sweetness there for that? Does not John xii. 24 - 26 call and beckon to us, and in setting this free over His own sacred person, will He not permeate our broken personalities and radiate them with His own glory? So in losing, we shall find ourselves in Him as in the prayer Paul prayed in II Thess. i. 12. Did Mary regret her broken box and poured-out ointment? In the light of Christ's sacrifice, as she caught the vision, could she do less? Can *we*? Any sweetness, any treasure of the Christ-life we hold, shall it not be set free for Him at the cost of shattered personalities? Is there any victory so great as the sweetness set free in a Spirit-guided, sacrificial life of service?

2. BROKEN PURPOSES LEADING INTO LARGER EXPERIENCES OF GOD AND RELEASING PRAYER POWER AS WITH JOB

We get the word 'break' or 'broken' fairly often in this book—Job ix. 17; xii. 14; xvi. 12, 14. But xvii. 11 gives us our heading '*broken purposes*'. To a man of a purposeful, directed life, this is a sore trial, and we ask the how and the why, and what *were* his purposes that they should be broken? They were all good ones, see chapter xxix. 12 - 17, so good that it was difficult for Job to see any blessing outside of them. And now they were broken off. *Why?* 'The better often is the foe that keeps us from the best.' Chapter xxix. verse 18 gives us Job's outlook. This, and just this, was to continue to the end. He was to die in his nest. But the mother-eagle breaks up the nest where she has

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so carefully reared her little ones when a larger life is calling and there is space for undeveloped powers (Deut. xxxii. 11, 12). So God had to break the framework of Job's little Eden *to let in more of God!* All *he* sought to know of God was inside that framework—outside was a blank, but *God* was there, calling. Job xxiii. 8, 9 reveals the bitter despair of his search for God. The God he knew and served was not working in accordance with the past pattern of his life. He felt out into the past, but could not find Him, nor could he, in reaching forward to the future, discover Him. God had a higher end in view; He was working to a different scale, and Job, educated on the past revelation he had so enjoyed, could not find Him. Nor could his three friends help him here, for they, too, were arguing from a past experience and found Job in the wrong when his life did not tally with their false measurement of God. And the lesson for us? God does not always explain Himself, and there may be no precedent in our lives by which to fathom the course God is taking now. But He is out in the Beyond, calling to us by the very longing in our hearts for more (Jer. xxxiii. 3). *Do not measure God with the yardstick of your past experience.* The past framework of blessed realisations do not contain the bigger thing God is showing us. In vain we seek Him within the limits of our knowledge, and our souls are confused. Don't expect Him there. Let Him break the mould of the past, and let us stand with Him in awe 'on the edge of these His ways', like the little nestless eagle on the precipice shelf. You can fly; you can soar into the bottomless Beyond further than eye can perceive or heart can conceive, and He is there, leading you out into the unknown where God is (I Cor. ii. 9, 10; Eph. iii. 20, 21). It is *not* that the past has not been satisfactory to God and to you (Job i. 8 and ii. 3 and xxix. 2, 3), only that our Father has something better and bigger for His adolescents. "Let us go on".

And the result?—greater freedom and power in prayer. We are apt to overlook this in Job xlii or treat it as a mere incident. Is it not an end and a much-to-be desired one? We think of verses 10 and 12 and 16 as 'the end which the Lord wrought for him' (James v. 11). Why did God use Job in the prayer realm *before* He turned the captivity of his sore sickness? Was it not to prove to the friends that Job, still sick and an outcast, was *not* outcast by God? Their judgment in this was wrong, "him will I accept". What confused, cross wires there are to-day preventing the working of Heaven's telephone! It matters to God to put these wrong

judgments of one another right. Job's friends had left him because he persisted in counting himself righteous. They came back to a man whom God was counting righteous, to ask for prayer and blessing. How were the wires straightened out? Not by long explanations and apologies, but by getting right visions of *God*. Job needed this. His friends needed it. How did Job get it? There was no written word of God to which Job could turn—no Cross speaking back to Creation and forward to God's glorious purpose in eternity on which Job could form his vision as we can. God used the lesson-book of nature. Probably our greatest need in the prayer-realm is the realisation of God's greatness and skilfulness and love in handling things. This is what burst upon Job (chapters xxxviii to xlii) and brought him on his face before God, ashamed of his littleness (Job xl. 4, 5 and xlii. 2-6). He was brought up against something too great for him, and he put his hand upon his mouth and listened. God spoke to him of the skilful laying of foundations and bringing His work to completion till all the sons of God burst forth into song (chapter xxxviii. 4-9); of skilful holding back the powers that would overwhelm and destroy (verses 8 to 11)—this God had been doing in Job's case, though it might not seem so (chapter i. 12 and ii. 6); skilful bringing of light out of darkness and ordering its ways (verses 12 to 21)—this also He was prepared to do for Job without taking him back to months past (chapter xxix. 2, 3; cf. Hosea vi. 1-3); skilful use of the treasures of cold and snow which He uses in his battle with men's preconceived ideas and wilfulness, shutting out God (chapter xxxviii. 22-30); skilful handling of the heavens and their earthward influence (chapter xxxviii. 31 to 41, especially verse 33); skilful handling of nature and its forces for unintelligent animal life (chapter xxxix); and finally, God's skill and consummate power as seen in one of the mightiest of His beasts (chapter xl and xli—"his comely proportion" xli. 12). If God can so create and put things together in such infinite detail and with such exquisite care, and they *work*, can we not trust Him with our affairs, even where we do not trace Him? Isa. xxviii. 22-29 draws the same conclusion—the Father's excellent counsel which He is able to carry through effectively, illustrated by the lessons taught to the husbandman in his daily cultivation of the soil. So God humbled Job in order to bless him, and the result of these larger visions of God was increased prayer-power—room to give God room and the taking in of others formerly left outside the orbit of his prayer-

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life. And this blessing reaches down to us, (see James v. 11).

3. BROKEN PLANS RELEASING CHRIST-LIFE

even for those souls for whom the broken plans were made.

For this we turn to Paul's life and ministry. Tracing it carefully, we find *delayed plans*; *curtailed opportunity*; *uncertainty* as to fellow-workers and as to his own course, but glorious retrievals through the Cross of Calvary. We pause first to consider Acts xix. 21—"Paul purposed in the spirit" a very different thing from purposing in the flesh! Our Father in Heaven has purposes to carry out which He commits to us in the depth of our spirit. It is for us to take hold of these in child-like faith and cherish them believingly through all the confusion and counter-planning which is sure to arise where God has a purpose to carry out and an enemy determined to hinder Him. Thus Christ lived and acted (see John v. 19), and thus may we (John vi. 57), and so did Paul (Acts xx. 22 - 24). God loves a purposeful soul, and it is absolutely necessary to have *direction* in life. But to such, the breaking of plans formed to carry out that purpose means much suffering, and we are out to see what God brings out of broken plans while He is carrying His purpose through. Paul reached Macedonia, Achaia, Jerusalem, and Rome, and in that order, but plans made by the way often broke under the pressure of circumstances or changed conditions in others. Before the date mentioned in Acts xix. 21, he had planned return visits to Thessalonica (see I Thess. ii. 17, 18; also iii. 10). What an excellent plan! What a good object! But it broke through Satanic pressure (I Thess. ii. 18), and Paul, keen Paul, who allowed no grass to grow under his feet, found the benefit of *delays* that God had allowed the enemy to plan. What did God bring out of these *delays*? Young Timothy was sent back (I Thess. iii. 2) to minister comfort and strength to the tried Thessalonian Christians, and what a development that would mean to him! What joy and comfort came to Paul, also, out of this ministry (I Thess. ii. 6 - 9), and what blessing to us in the two epistles written while he waited to go to them himself, for it was years before he again touched Thessalonica.

And after this date and this set purpose was formed, or possibly about the same time, Paul was minded to visit Corinth (II Cor. i. 15, 16). Macedonia was in the plan as well as Achaia, and Paul thought to visit Corinth first, to give them two

visits, one before Macedonia and one after, but the condition of the Corinthian church *delayed* this visit (verses 23, 24). Mothers and fathers know what it is to plan things they deeply desire for their children, and what it is to have that longing and those plans foiled and long *delayed* by immaturity in the children and failure to understand their best. So Paul suffered with the Corinthian church. And what did God gain out of it? Titus was sent back with a letter while Paul waited. What a gain to Titus! (II Cor. vii. 7 - 16; viii. 6, 23). Here Titus grew to be a partner and fellow-helper to Paul, and "the glory of Christ"! And what added joy Paul got out of this ministry! (II Cor. vii. 7, 13). And we get the two letters to the Corinthians written while his return visit was *delayed*.

Then there was *curtailed opportunity* in plans the Enemy broke while yet the purpose was maturing. How much this meant to a man like Paul, eager to use every opportunity to the utmost! After the vision given in Acts xix. 21, Paul was determined to stay at Ephesus until Pentecost (I Cor. xvi. 8) because of the "great door and effectual opened to him there (and note it *was opened* to him). The riot recorded in Acts xix broke this plan and curtailed his opportunity at Ephesus, and remember, he never went there again. How did God's work gain for souls out of this? *Others* entered that open door. In I Tim. i. 2 - 4, we find Paul beseeching his son, Timothy, to abide at Ephesus when he himself was thrust out to Macedonia (Acts xx. 1, 2). What a gain to young Timothy again to stand fast in the doctrines committed to the saints, as he talked and warned against the errors which Paul knew must creep in (Acts xx. 29, 30)—to him would be committed much responsibility when Paul was taken prisoner at Jerusalem and he needed to grow to it. Then Aristarchus and Gaius, Paul's companions of travel, were left there, caught by the maddened crowd when Paul was held back by his friends from endangering himself with them. How much their witness would mean to Ephesus (Acts xix. 29 - 31). And Aquila and Priscilla were there to use the open door. The church was in their house (I Cor. xvi. 19)—how much they would mean to that church bereft of its leader; how much they had to pass on, learned in close fellowship with Paul (Acts xviii. 1 - 3, 18, 26). We get *curtailed opportunity* again as Paul leaves Ephesus and travels toward Macedonia through Troas. God opens him another door for the Gospel (II Cor. ii. 12), but his spirit was burdened over his Corinthian children, and he could not rest until he met Titus with news of

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them. So *that* door was left unentered. What about that? We shall come to it later in God's retrievals, and pass on now to *curtailed opportunity* in Jerusalem and Rome when Paul was taken prisoner. What did God gain out of this? Time, I think, at Caesarea where Paul was kept two years to talk to His tired servant and to reveal deeper fulnesses of His grace. Out of this period (though written later) surely sprang the epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, with all their store of deeper truths. So we get the benefit again, and Paul also, as well as the churches to which he wrote. Was his opportunity really *curtailed*, or was it narrowed for a time to widen out into wider, world-wide channels? And out of the imprisonment both in Jerusalem and in Rome came witnessing to Kings as foretold in God's original plan for Paul's life (Acts ix. 15), and through the latter the Gospel got into Caesar's palace (Phil. i. 12, 13; iv. 22).

Uncertainty about fellow-workers and even at times as to his own course was another feature in God's dealing with His servant. In the delayed plan for visiting Corinth, he hoped that Timothy, then in Macedonia, would get down to Corinth and would be welcomed there (I Cor. xvi. 10, 11). Probably circumstances delayed him, we never read that he reached Corinth. Uncertainty would mean much in suspense of Paul's broken heart about conditions in Corinth. Then he "greatly desired" Apollos to go to them (I Cor. xvi. 12)—Apollos whose ministry had meant much to that Church—but Apollos had other plans and could not harmonize them with Paul's plans. Paul learned to trust his fellow-workers with God and await His time for using them.

And now we come to God's glorious *retrievals*. Upon some we have already touched. There was the curtailed opportunity at Ephesus when the riot drove Paul on to Macedonia. He never returned, but on the way to Jerusalem, passing Miletus, he arranged to meet the elders of the Ephesian church, and what a precious opportunity he had there with hearts melted and open to receive Paul's last words and warnings, an opportunity never to be renewed. How many men of God, leaving sorrowing congregations, have used these words to the elders of Miletus! I believe Ephesus got more out of them than a continued ministry would have given had not the riot smashed those plans. And later from Rome came the glorious epistle conveying so much blessing to Ephesus and to us. Are not God's retrievals worthwhile? And there was the one at Troas when later Paul passed through on his way

to Jerusalem, and for seven days (Acts xx. 6 - 12), used the open door he had at an earlier time passed by. A long sermon, a miracle, a talk till break of day left that little church much comforted ere Paul passed on. Can plans that God has made be broken by the enemy? It would seem so if you read II Cor. i. 15 - 24, noting particularly verse 17. Think back a bit to the beginning of things. God had a plan in Eden and He saw that it was very good. The plan centred around a man in a garden, but the devil broke it (Gen. i to iii). What then? God had a reserve plan that centred around another Man in a garden, God's last Adam, His second Man (I Cor. xv. 45 - 47). On that Man fell the burden of Eden's broken plan and all it involved. In Gethsemane He took that burden and bore it to the Cross. In another garden His broken body was laid awaiting Resurrection. At Calvary God's reserved plan triumphed over all the works of the enemy and brought in the Resurrection-morning and the Ascension-triumph and a safe place where we may hide from such darts of the Evil One as triumphed in Eden. We can also share His unsailable resurrection-victory (Col. iii. 1 - 4). When plans inbreathed by God fail under the devil's assault, look for His reserved plan and triumph through it.

4. BROKEN PERIODS RELEASING THE GLORY OF THE FATHER THROUGH BROKEN CHRIST-LIKE LIVES

We come now to II Cor. i. to iv, written just after the Ephesus riot described in Acts xix. Paul was very evidently under nervous strain. What had caused it? And, more important, what was God working through it? It was scarcely caused by a riot from which he had been saved by the urgent intreaty of his friends. And yet I think the riot had something to do with it. Did it cost Paul *more* or *less* to leave his friends to bear the brunt of those antagonistic elements and slip away to *Macedonia*? The words about Aquila and Priscilla in Romans xvi. 3, 4 would seem to refer to this time—the church was in their house at Ephesus. If God's reserve plans, born at the Cross of Calvary, are to triumph, we must not prevent our loved ones sharing in the gain and loss. (We had reason to refer here once again to the lady who sought to ease and expedite the butterfly's emergence from the chrysalis.) We help our loved ones best, and God's work also, by letting them share in the agony and triumph of Calvary in any measure in which God would apply it to their lives, though this may cause more agony to us than to them as we suffer

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

with them. Was this part of Paul's strain after Ephesus?

Then I think we cannot miss the element of *perplexity* about his own plans and course of action. Was he right to let entreaties prevail? Was he right to have left Troas where God had opened a door, because his spirit was so burdened for Corinth? Was he right to have written that letter that would cause so much pain (II Cor. vii. 8) to his beloved Corinthians? What effect would it have? "Perplexed" is a word Paul uses in speaking of the strain (II Cor. iv. 8); and perplexity, Miss Carmichael has said, is part of the discipline of the Holy Spirit in renewing us in the Christ-likeness. I think perplexity as to plans was part of the pressure under which Paul broke in those days.

And then, above all, there was the condition of the Corinthian church. What tension that caused in his spirit! And just here, more than anywhere, God could write in his heart the lessons of the Cross of Calvary which *must* blossom into life and victory for others. Follow the line of II Cor. i. 6, 7 and iv. 10 - 15. Look on at chapters xii 15 and xiii. 4 - 9, and you will see the Cross deeply planted in Paul's heart and life that the Corinthian Christians might gain out of it the blessing he so yearned to give them. These were the elements which caused Paul's strain in the *broken period* recorded in II Cor. i to iv.

And what was God's purpose in it all? And how did He release the glory of the Father through that broken experience Paul was passing through? I think His main purpose was this (though even there it reaches down to us and to all sorely-troubled children of God in these perplexing days)—the Corinthian Christians were carnal, and that means they were taken up with *things* rather than the glory of the eternal. 'My dear, they are only *things*' said Jonathan Goforth to his bride, reviewing their spoiled possessions in China. And from him she learned afresh the smallness of things in view of the priceless possessions of eternity. 'My dear, we have not come to evangelize the scenery', said Donald Fraser to his wife, as she reluctantly turned from the beautiful view their first home afforded them in Africa, to press forward with the Gospel. *Things* were hiding the vision of the glory of God from the hearts and minds of the Corinthian Christians (II Cor. iv. 4 - 7). This treasure was committed to earthen vessels, and if Paul's earthen vessel shattered that the glory might shine out (v. 16), what then? The Corinthians

would have gained far more than a possible second visit of Paul could have meant—more than Apollo's eloquence and Timothy's youthful zeal could ever accomplish. Paul's brokenness reached the spot and melted them into blessing. Is it not perhaps when youthful energy fails and the outward man perishes that we can bring God our gift of brokenness and through it He can do mightier things?

What is the glory of the Father which God sought to release through Paul's shattered nerves and overstrain? Is not God's glory just Himself, all *He is*, and is it not chiefly seen at the Cross? (John xiii. 31, 32) Don't be surprised when you ask for wider service if God plants the *Cross* more deeply into your heart and life. It will mean wider service, and, without that, wider service would be in vain. 'There is always some fresh part of our lives on which God can stamp the Cross' (A Carmichael). Shall we welcome it, embrace it, take it up and follow? It will lead to untold blessing.

So in times of brokenness, let us steadily look at the things God is working out through the trial (II Cor. iv. 18), the glory which must follow. Let us expect a glorious answer to the prayers of others (II Cor. i. 11)—one we can share with them, in rejoicing, before God (II Cor. iv. 15). Let us look out for the abundance of grace He is surely ministering to us in the trial (II Cor. iv. 15), and, above all, let us tie up with the Cross of Calvary and with the Man of the Cross, that the glory released at Calvary may by the working of His Holy Spirit get into us deeper down (II Cor. iii. 18); and thus out to others. The same Holy Spirit who led Christ to Calvary will make effective in us what He did there as we identify ourselves with Him. All along the way He will interpret to us as he did to Paul (Acts xx. 23), the meaning of Calvary as applied in our lives, and as we stand before some specially shattering crisis in God's perfect plan for our lives, the Lord Jesus, our risen, glorified companion, will stand by us as with Paul (Acts xxiii. 11; xxvii. 23, 24; II Tim. iv. 16, 17), with His "fear not, *thou must*". And we shall know, through shattered hopes and delayed plans, God's purpose committed to us is being fulfilled, and above all, the "glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" is shining out through the broken earthen vessel. Then triumphantly we shall say with Paul and all the glorified saints. 'Yes, brokenness *is* blessing when Christ Himself is set free. Amen! Hallelujah!'

F. B.

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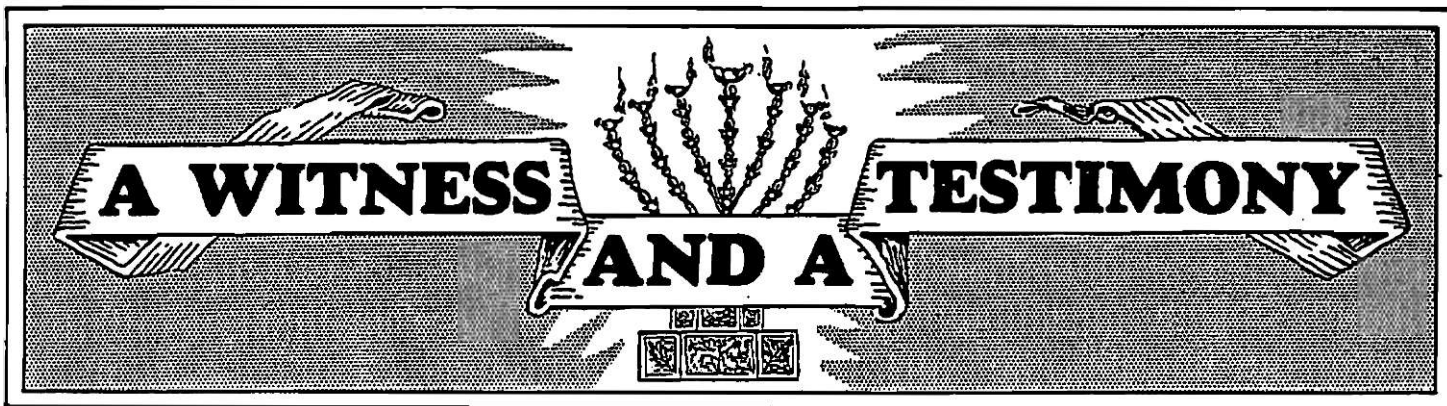
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EDITORIAL

IN our last Editorial—in speaking of the earth-touch—we broke off with ‘ maybe more later ’. Well there *is* more, and this is the ‘ later ’. Our premise is that this earth and all in it lies under a curse and judgment, but that those “ born from above ” are fundamentally separated by the Cross of Christ from this earth, in a spiritual way. But most of the troubles in Christianity are due to some *spiritual* contact with, and involvement in that realm of death where the Divine ban operates. We are going to illustrate this with very vivid instances in the Bible. Most of our illustrations will be the cases of servants or people of God, which will give just the point that we are trying to make. It is when *the Lord's people* touch this earth (in a spiritual way) that trouble ensues.

We begin with Abraham. As to his fundamental separation there is no question. That he was a committed man of God allows of no doubt. But at a point when faith was sorely tried in view of seeming impossibilities—actual impossibilities *naturally*—he resorted to a natural way through, and tried to resolve the situation “by natural means. He came down from his heavenly position of “with God all things are possible” and touched earth when he resorted to Hagar as the solution.

We need not enlarge upon the entail of shame, regret, and tragedy, not only in his own life and that of Hagar, but right up to date in Ishmael. That earth-touch has indeed stood as a mighty warning to all such. It is the earth-touch of an *alternative* to faith when the natural can offer us nothing.

From there we move on to Jacob. Rebecca had been precisely told that of the two sons about

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

to be born "the elder shall serve the younger". In her obvious favouritism for Jacob it is unlikely that she had said nothing of this to him. But together they connived at securing the birthright by cunning, deceptive, and lying ways. It was undoubtedly an earth-touch. Coming down to a low and carnal way of trying to effect the purpose of God. The result—twenty years of dishonour; deceiving and being deceived; extending the doubtful way of success(?); policy, not principle. Success has no law—the end justifies the means, and all such specious arguments. But Jabbok and Peniel are God's verdict and appraisal, and even one chosen in the sovereignty of God will not get away with an earth-touch.

Joseph stands very high in the verdict of history and the noble of Bible biographies. But, undoubtedly, one definite aspect of the long years of the prison—being forgotten, and "the iron entering his soul"—was the discipline of that earth-touch of pride, conceit, and vanity which led him to tell his dreams to his brethren. Dreams which came true, yes, but when personal self-importance obtrudes itself even into the Divine intentions the whole thing can go down into death and suspense.

We leap the years and arrive at Moses. Here again we are in the presence of Divine sovereign intention and purpose, both as to the object and the instrument: the object—to fulfil the promise to Abraham, to bring his seed as a great nation out of bondage to possess the covenanted land; the instrument—a babe miraculously preserved and a man richly trained. But in manhood—the earth-touch; putting his own hands on the purpose and work of God, and by his own zeal, strength, and prestige essaying to effect that which was to be for ever one of the greatest testimonies in history to the power and glory of God *alone*. The result—forty desolating years at the back side of the desert; a scholar, trained leader, prince of Egypt eating his heart out while tending a few sheep. His feet had touched the *earth* in more than a physical way, and there was more than a physical meaning in the Lord's words at long last "Take off thy shoes from off thy feet". There is no earth-touch with God.

It is another long leap to Joshua and Ai. What a lot of Divine history and sovereignty, to say nothing of patience and faithfulness, lie behind the eventual arrival of the people in the Land. Surely all the assurances and encouragements given to Joshua will not permit of a single wrong threatening the whole issue with disaster! But so it was! "Achan . . . took of the accursed thing", and the surge forward was brought to an untimely stop with no *small* consternation to Joshua and Israel. The earth-touch of personal ambition, covetousness, and lust for personal gain.

We conclude the survey by reminding ourselves of the disastrous results of David's counting of Israel. It is possible to make even the great blessings of God the ground and occasion of self-gratification; to point to that which is just of His grace, His mercy, and His faithfulness, and draw some satisfaction and congratulation to our own souls. It cost David the loss of many thousands of his people, shame and remorse to himself, and a stain upon his story. Yes, God in sovereign grace never cast him off but still brought the site of the Temple out of the chastisement of David's flesh.

What a story this earth-touch is! We have by no means covered all the ground. We could add many more instances from Old Testament *and* New Testament, but this is enough to underline the essential heavenly life, position, and government of the people—and servants—of the Lord, and to make us reach out to see if there be any leaven in our house. The Lord help us ever to keep disentangled from the realm and things of death. How we need to

"Dwell in the secret place of the Most High", and so "Abide under the shadow of the Almighty".

Surely this gives point and meaning to our Lord's words: "Abide in me".

So help us God.

EDITOR

SEPTEMBER — OCTOBER, 1962.

THE STEWARDSHIP OF THE MYSTERY

CHAPTER THREE

(continued)

THE PARTICULAR MYSTERY

THE word 'mystery' is found twenty-seven times in the received text of the New Testament and is related to several matters. The Lord Jesus said to the twelve disciples that it was given to them to know the mysteries of the Kingdom. Paul, as we have seen, claimed to have a special revelation of the mystery; not the mysteries, but *the* particular mystery. This revelation constituted his particular stewardship, and we have tried to show how very vital and important that stewardship is for this dispensation. So it becomes us to define that particular "mystery". The farthest that most teachers have gone is to make it to mean the uniting of Jew and Gentile in the Church. "That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs" (Eph. iii. 6). This view or conclusion seems to have a great deal of support especially when chapters ix to xv of Romans are read. The imperfection of this conclusion or deduction is not in the simple statement that Jews *and* Gentiles are united in Christ, but in retention of the names in Christ. The fact is that in Christ there are *no* Jews and there are *no* Gentiles. *As such* they disappear in the grave of Christ, i.e., baptism as a testimony to union with Christ in death and burial. There is no such thing as a baptized Jew or a baptized Gentile. The 'mystery' is that "of the twain [he makes] one new man" (Eph. ii. 15), and the point is "in himself".

So, the 'mystery' is that Christ in resurrection is the firstborn of a new humanity in which there is *neither* Jew nor Greek, circumcision nor uncircumcision, etc. Every dividing distinction of nationality, culture, language, colour, country, etc., etc., is removed in the Cross of Christ because these things are the entail of a curse and the evil brood of the disruption to which we have referred earlier.

In the realm of Christ; in the realm of the Holy Spirit; in the realm of the One Body and the One Life they have no standing. They are great realities in the natural realm and may constitute difficulties, but the Spirit of Christ forbids that they govern attitudes and prejudices.

In Christ there is a common basis which makes fellowship a real and blessed thing even where in

the natural all these things exist—even in one place. This is one of the most powerful testimonies to the reality of Christ and the work of His Cross. It is indeed "the mystery of Christ".

Paul refers to this when he says that "Christ in you [is] the hope of glory". It is literally "Christ *in the midst* of you". It is in this connection that he says, "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh". The "henceforth" refers back to "Christ died for [in the place of] all, therefore all died [in Him]" "Wherefore, if any man be in Christ there is a new creation" (II Cor. v. 16, 17).

It is just here that the great need is to recognize

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRIST.

In the natural world all the effects of the great schism in the universe to which we have referred will govern relationships and attitudes. Indeed, they are the very nature and constitution of things, postulating a control, a strangle-hold by forces inimical, hostile, and viciously antagonistic to harmony, concord, and peace. Racial discriminations and prejudices; 'colour bars'; class distinctions; race superiorities; and everything else of its kind and spirit emanate from a curse upon creation due to Satanic interference. It is all the disruption that is in the very nature of man and things. To change this, man has to be changed in constitution. Christ is different; He is of another order of humanity. In Christ there is "neither . . . nor", but only one new man. In Christ there is a *new* creation, where there *cannot be* this and that of inimical differences and conflicting natures. There is no way *through* this situation, the only way is *above* it, ascendancy over it. The Church is viewed as "seated with Christ in the heavenlies", and the sooner we realise that this is no abstract, idealistic, unreal, and theoretical position—to say nothing of it being a geographical position—the sooner will our Christianity regain its power and impact. That position is a spiritual one. That is, it is a position of the spirit in the power and energy of the Holy Spirit. Where Heaven is we do not know, but the "heavenlies" are right here around us, pressing

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upon us and seeking to elevate us in our inward life as "in Christ".

The heart of the whole matter is in Ephesians i. 9, 10—"having made known . . . the mystery of his will . . . which he purposed in him, unto a dispensation [stewardship, or outworking] of the fulness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ . . ." To 'sum up' means literally 'to reunite'; to reunite all things in Christ.

Three phases are indicated: The eternal purpose that "all things" were the Son's heritage, to be in Him: the universal rift by reason of a bid for the Son's place and heritage: the secret hid in God as to how to realise the purpose and destroy the rift, through the Cross to 'reunite all things in Christ'. This represents the essential sphere of unity—"In Christ"; and a power working through the Cross to a resurrection position—"the exceeding greatness of his power" (Ephes. i. 19).

In the first edition of *The Stewardship of the Mystery* VOL. II (now out of print), we said some things which were taken up in two ways and given a meaning different from and beyond what was intended. The construction put upon them was—in both cases—that of our seeking to be divisive among the Lord's people.

The extremists of 'come-out'ism used what we said to support their position and they gave occasion to others for opposing us on the ground of being divisive in our teaching and influence. The fact is that both were wrong. Ours was a wholly constructive object, positive and not negative.

The following is what we wrote then and we can only ask that it will now be viewed as an attempt to show how great and how different Christ is as the all-uniting person and nature.

Seeing that "the mystery" which was revealed to the Apostle Paul in a particular and fuller way is shown to be Christ personal and Christ corporate, it is necessary for us to look more earnestly into

THE PECULIAR SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DEFINITION "THE BODY".

We have to get nearer to the special definition of the Church as the Body of Christ. It has been said by some that the term is only a metaphor. But when we look at all that is said about it in Paul's letters we have to say that if any man's body is only a metaphor, then this is. Can we regard our own bodies as of merely metaphorical significance, or are they of literal and practical meaning or reality? There surely cannot be any doubt as to

the practical reality of the Church as Christ's Body! However, we shall see. To understand the significance of this definition it is first of all necessary to recognize the significance of Christ Himself. There is first the personal and then the related significance.

In Himself Christ took up all the eternal interests of God as bound up with the Elect. God had an inheritance or "heritage" in that corporate company. God's heritage was "alienated" from Him. God's heritage was marred. God's heritage was turned to serve purposes which were contrary to Him and His intention. God's heritage was taken possession of by powers inimical to His interests. In relation to *this*, God's Son undertook a full recovery and restoration *to God* of His rights, His purposes, and His instrument.

The point is that this Son of God as Son of Man did not undertake this work in an independent and detached way, but Himself became the representative and embodiment of all this. Because moral factors were involved requiring judgment and death a *position* had to be accepted. This could be nothing merely official, it had to be moral and spiritual. So, in order to effect a full recovery to a *position* in keeping with God's holiness for holy purposes, the Son of God was "made sin" (*in the hour of His atoning work*), entered into the alienation because of that accepted position ("My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"); became marred ("marred more than any man"); fought out the battle of God's rights, and destroyed the inimical powers and works; redeemed the heritage "*unto God*"; secured the Elect in "the blood of the everlasting covenant"; and ratified the eternal purpose.*

We repeat, this was all done in no merely official capacity, but He and the heritage and the Elect became one in experience. Finality rested with Christ. God had no other in reserve if He failed. He was not the *Second* Adam, but the *Last* Adam. God has "at the *end* . . . spoken in his Son". Well, then; Christ as risen and exalted is the personal embodiment of everything which relates in God's eternal thought to the Church.

Then the next phase is that—while He remains a living person and a distinct member of Godhead—He is given "to be head over all things to the

* *We must ever keep the broad line between that which Christ was inherently as sinless, and that which He took upon Himself representatively. A guiltless One took the place and judgment of the guilty.*

church which is his body, the fulness of him . . .” All this fulness is now—in the first instance—not embodied in a separate person as one by Himself, but in a Head as one with the Body. The Head holds all in relation to the Body. The Body gets all in relation to the Head. The full statement of this is in Ephesians i, leading up to verses 18.-22. No individual or number of individuals *as such* can obtain the inheritance; it requires the Body. Two things, amongst others, postulate this fact.

Firstly, the use of the article in the Greek in this connection. A classic instance is in I Cor. xii. 12 :

“ . . . *As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ*” (Greek, “*the Christ*”).

This is not an isolated case. It is a form used when Christ and His members as one Body are in view. Its force is that the members and the Head—for all purposes of God here—are “*the Christ*”. The whole subject or truth of identification with Christ is bound up with this. Let us be most explicit and emphatic that we are not touching the personal existence of the Son, as a member of the Godhead. This term “*the Christ*” is His official, not His personal designation.

Then there is that other fact to which reference has been—and yet will be—made. That which springs out of or issues from Christ’s resurrection as in God’s eye and Heaven’s mind is a “*one new man*”. If you carefully read the various passages dealing with this One New Man you will find that you cannot discriminate between Christ and His members. Take, for instance, the following :

“ . . . *the building up of the body of Christ; till we all attain unto . . . a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ . . . may grow up in all things into him, which is the head even Christ* [Gk., “*the Christ*”]; *from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together . . . maketh the increase of the body . . .*” (Ephesians iv. 12, 13, 15, 16).

“ . . . *holding fast the Head, from whom all the body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increaseth . . . and have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him: where there cannot be Greek and Jew, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all, and in all*” (Colossians ii. 19; iii. 10).

This brings us to see that what our members are to our heads, the Body of Christ is to Him. It

is for the expression of what He is and has done in Himself.

But there is another aspect of this which need only be mentioned, for all know it. As Christ personally was the shrine of God on earth, so the Body is the shrine of the Trinity.

“*Ye are the temple of God*”, “*A habitation of God through the Spirit*”. “*Christ in you the hope of glory*”, etc.

As to the practical values and outworkings of this corporate nature of the Church we have much to say yet, but let it be seen that, not in an institution, an organization, but as a personal living presence in a spiritual organism Christ is present in the whole spiritual cosmic realm.

We must take account of some of the implications of this definition—the Body.

SOME IMPLICATIONS OF “THE BODY”

Firstly these implications are corrective.

There are many either false or imperfectly considered ideas about the Church, and a real revelation to the heart by the Holy Spirit of the truth will result in considerable adjustment.

If there is any real Divine mind behind the definition of the Church as the Body of Christ, and the One New Man, then the Church cannot be five things which obtain in ‘Church History’, or ‘Ecclesiastical Polity’. It cannot be national. It cannot be international. It cannot be denominational. It cannot be interdenominational. It cannot be undenominational.

What sort of a man is this One New Man? What kind of a body is this Body of Christ? Is he a National man? Then there cannot be “*one Body*”! Is he an international man? Then he must be a composite man, embodying the features and characteristics of all nations. We will not carry the question further. All these designations which we have mentioned represent something, as apart from something else, to the Church. They distinguish Christians; they put some here and some there; some in this and others *not in this*. Even the last-named—undenominational—as a good-intentioned measure to get over sectarian barriers or distinguishing marks, but sets up another boundary, and misses the positive truth of the Body of Christ; it is at least negative.

Before we proceed let us pause a moment. We are anxious to avoid unnecessary misunderstanding. We are *not* saying that because many believers are in the various denominations they are not

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in the Body of Christ. Rather would we say that the Body of Christ comprises those who are truly joined to Himself wherever they may be found. So that no one must imagine that we suggest that in order to be in some thing called "the Body of Christ" they must leave their denomination. We should say that denominations are not an expression—in themselves—of the Body, and *can be* either a definite limitation or a real hindrance to the full thought of God. We recognize that there may be a fine difference between denominations and *denominationalism*; the one being more or less passive, the other positive. The latter would certainly be a menace to the truth of the Body of Christ. What we mean by *denominationalism* is the definite pursuance of denominational interests. There are many people of God in denominations who are not denominational in any positive and aggressive way, but who are rather where they are because that is where they have met the Lord. They love the Lord and desire to go on with Him. What we are saying is not meant to be a judgment of such, nor in the spirit of criticism, but out of real love for every fellow-member of Christ. If a *thing* has to be judged as being less or other than the Lord's full or true thought; and if it is seen—in the light of fuller revelation and corresponding experience—to be only good *as far as it goes*, but not good in relation to a fuller thought of God, then those who are in it will only come under that judgment if and when they fail to have light which God has made available, or disobey light given. This, of course, will touch upon the question of whether the Cross has dealt with the natural life, and whether there is a walk in the Spirit. Let no one think therefore that we are out against Christians because they are in this or that department of the whole company of believers, nor yet that it is our aim to destroy those departments. We are concerned with positive spiritual reality, and we say with Paul

"admonishing every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ; whereunto I labour, striving according to his working which worketh in me mightily" (Colossians i. 28, 29).

But we recognize and know that "perfect in Christ" is related to the Body, as the context shows—

"I . . . fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ . . . for his body's sake, which is the church" etc. (verse 24 - 7).

We would never say anything which would raise an issue which is fraught with so much suffering

and misunderstanding were it merely a technical question, and were we not convinced that the gain to the Lord and His people far outweighs that cost, and justifies the "afflictions". Our objective is constructive, not destructive; positive, not negative; love, not judgment or criticism.

But to resume where we paused. Have you seen the Son of Man? Of what nation or nationality is He? Into what *section* of mankind do you fit Him as the Son of Man? What is His category in that capacity? To what people does He belong, or to what temperament, clime, or time? You answer, to all! Yes, and more! He reaches over all time limits, over all earth distinctions, outside of this present order of creation. He is a Man whose like has never been in this earth. He answers to the full and final thought of God as before man was created. He is eternal in conception, heavenly, universal. Yet He is Man. Now come back to Paul. In this New Man to which he calls attention all the points which distinguish between people here are ruled out. Jews and Gentiles, and all others, *as such*, cease to be. They have disappeared when the Body of Christ comes into view—"there can be neither"; not 'there are both'. That principle extended means that in the Church which is His Body there are not British, French, German, Indian, Chinese, etc., all making up the one Church. No! (Here is the fundamental weakness.) If Christ really gets into a man or woman by new birth; that is, if the Holy Spirit really and truly takes up residence as Lord within, the one pre-eminent reality and fact there is Christ! Let the persons concerned recognize and realise that; let all other responsible workers recognize that and certain things will follow. A new and altogether other Factor will be there to govern that life. That Factor can be trusted to check up. The seeds of another nature are there. We need not all the time be taking account of national disposition, temperament, accountability. It is a shame to see how many Christians despise other Christian 'nationals', especially if those others have come from a 'heathen' nation. It all amounts to whether the fundamental reality is there implanted, and then as to whether we trust the Holy Spirit in one another; or whether we are all the time trying to do the Holy Spirit's work. It is wonderful how the Apostles cast their converts and their churches upon the Lord.

Now it is this other, heavenly, Divine, Factor—"Christ in you"—one indivisible Person—who constitutes the Body. "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh". Why? Because "one died

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for all, therefore all died in him". We know quite well that the universality of Christ is a reality in every true child of God, for we instantly have something in common with such whatever their nationality, even if we have never met before. It is only when we get on to man's side of things and leave the Lord that dividedness comes in.

In all love, yet in all faithfulness we venture to say that no one who has *really* had a revelation of the Body of Christ could remain *officially* or *spiritually* on positive national, international, racial, denominational, or other ground, if that ground represents a division amongst the people of God. The only possible position for such is that of open-

ness, fellowship, and ministry to "all saints". There are two things here to mention. One is that every matter such as this one should be a living issue in the hearts of those concerned. We realise that what we have said could be taken up legally, and action could be precipitate, and impulsive. Unless a thing is done by the Holy Spirit in the heart it can never be a Holy Spirit matter outwardly. It is therefore unwise and dangerous to tell people to leave this or that, do this thing and do that thing, unless already the Holy Spirit has done something. There are plenty of independent and unrelated movements which are neither fruitful nor living.

T. A-S.

(to be continued)

A PROPHET AT PRAYER

"O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, In the midst of the years make it known; In wrath remember mercy." (Habakkuk iii. 2.)

IT was no uncommon thing to find a prophet at prayer, but Habakkuk's whole book is devoted to this one thing. His three short chapters are occupied not with speaking on behalf of God to men, but rather with speaking on men's behalf to God Himself.

Habakkuk's name is thought by some to signify 'The Wrestler', the word being an intensive form of the verb 'to cling'. At a time when the kingdom itself was rocking, and when everything was in a state of disintegration, Habakkuk was the man who held on. He did not cling to things, not even to sacred things, but to the Lord. His outcry suggests that there was little to hold on to in the realm of things seen, and God's reply made it clear that there would soon be even less. The process of break-up was increasing and accelerating, so that by the end of his song the prophet is obliged to face the possibility that failure and disaster would become universal. Even so, he affirmed that he would not let go. Strengthened by the Lord, and lifted by Him above all the chaos, he determined that he would stand his ground and hold on.

It is very much easier to let go. When things seem to be falling to pieces, when failure and discouragement are rife everywhere, it needs great faith not to relinquish one's spiritual hold. Our prayer meetings provide ample evidence of this, not only by the absentees but by those who, though present, are without any positive contribution to

make. Inwardly they have let go. Habakkuk had more problems to contend with than any of us are likely to encounter, but he would not accept discouragement. He could not be shaken off. He would not let go.

At least he knew where God was—He was in His holy temple (ii. 20). Other than this he knew very little. He was a man full of questions; questions which do not seem to have been fully answered. He was bewildered. Sometimes he was afraid (iii. 2, 16). Yet he did not let go. The surrounding confusion, the apparent injustice, the unanswered prayers, the seeming indifference of Heaven; all this and much more baffled human wisdom and defied merely human strength. Still, however, Habakkuk held on. Faith was all that was left to him. It is, perhaps, all that is left to us. But faith is enough. Indeed faith is the one demand which God makes on us in such circumstances.

WHY HE PRAYED

It is necessary for us first to consider the background to this prayer for revival. It all began with an agonized complaint from God's servant who could not bear the burden which he was having to carry (i. 1 - 4).

The people were drifting away from God, the atmosphere was one of slackness and unholiness, and strangely enough there seemed to be no effort of God to arrest this spiritual decline. "Perverseness", "spoiling", "strife and contention", "judgment perverted", these are some of the unhappy conditions which distressed Habakkuk's

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soul. Alas! these are apt words to describe man's plight to-day, and they not only refer to our social and political life, but also to what is all too common among God's people.

"The law is slacked." To Habakkuk the law was the complete prophetic revelation, but what was its value if it were not being realised? His business was not to add to it, but to enquire why it was not working out. This is often our problem, not as to the absence of revelation but rather to the absence of its outworking. The Divine purpose is preached but it is not lived out. The greatest heartbreak of all was not man's failure to act but the apparent failure of God. In spite of his earnest prayers, there was no activity of God to remedy the situation. He seemed either unwilling to hear or unable to save.

It must have been with something of a shock that Habakkuk received the Lord's answer to his cry (i. 5 - 11). Far from offering an immediate remedy, the Lord spoke only to him of worse troubles to come. He Himself would raise up a "bitter and hasty nation", bringing further calamities to Israel, humbling and chastening them still more.

There are many mysteries associated with such a revelation of the strange ways of God, mysteries which none of us can explain. But one thing at least seems clear, and that is that the Lord does not lend Himself to easy and superficial recoveries from backsliding. Eager though He may be to show His kindness to us, He is bound in all faithfulness to seek our spiritual and eternal good. For this reason He refrains from relieving the situation. Indeed He sometimes has to let it worsen, in order to do a more thorough work. So it was with Israel. Because God was determined to have the earth filled with the knowledge of His glory (ii. 14), He needed to purge and refine the people who were destined to be His instrument.

How hard this is for us to accept! It must have been much harder for Habakkuk, who had no New Testament to throw light on what was happening. His response, however, is a lesson to us all.

HOW HE PRAYED

In spite of all his perplexity, the prophet did not give up his praying. Chapter ii opens with a new note of resolution. His mind was made up. The alternative to letting go was to adopt a more decided attitude. "I will stand", "I will set me . . .", "I will look forth . . ." It seems most

likely that the latter part of this verse should read, "to see what he will speak with me, and what answer I get back to my plea".

However, before we consider answers from God, we are forced to notice the prophet's determination to stand firm and not to run away. In his day the men who should have been watching were forsaking their places on the ramparts and towers. Here, at least, was one who refused to run away from the problems. It is a sad fact that when the things of God prosper, there is no difficulty in getting Christians to hold places of service and trust, but when difficulties arise and defeat threatens, then most of us tend either to leave and join something else, or to abdicate the responsibilities which we have formerly held. We will stand down! We will stand back! We will stand apart! Habakkuk was made of different stuff. He would stand; would stand up and would stand in. He would see the matter through, even if he were left with no visible proof of God's power.

He knew that he had not got the answer. He could not look to anyone else to provide it. No, it was God's answer that he must watch and wait for, and he intended to wait for it. There are some situations which can never be resolved by discussion, still less by misusing prayer meetings for the expression of our own opinions or ideas. What is needed, and what is all too rare, is a determination to wait on God, and to hand the matter entirely over to Him in humble submission.

This, then, was what Habakkuk was "standing" for; not for his own solution—he no longer had one to propose—but for some new act of God. When all our strength and arguments have been exhausted; when we are reduced to the conviction that none but God can supply the answer; then, and not till then, are we able to pray as Habakkuk prayed.

It seems that an immediate answer came. God gave no explanation of the 'why's and 'wherefore's. To do this would be to pander to our curiosity and conceit, to make us experts instead of suppliants. No, He gave no explanation, but He did give a promise and He also made a demand.

His promise was of full realisation of His will when the delayed "vision" at last came. Even the delay would not be a great one, if only men of God could be firm in waiting for it. The New Testament makes it quite clear what the promised "vision" refers to. It is the coming again of the Lord Jesus. Everything is heading up for that. Everything must be seen in the light of that. It is by that that the earth will be "filled with the

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knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

In the light of the promise, God asks but one thing of His servants, He asks for faith. The word used really means "faithfulness" and refers to sustained faith, the faith which holds on. When this quotation was used in the New Testament, the words were taken from the Greek version which makes verse 4 read as follows: "But my righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrink back, my soul hath no pleasure in him" (Heb. x. 38). This shows that when a man shrinks back it is God as well as he who loses by it. From every hand pressure is exerted to make God's people let go, run away or shrink back; faith alone will enable them to resist such pressure and so to bring joy to the heart of their God.

The promise and the demand go together. Divine intervention is not offered to those who allow themselves to be overwhelmed, but to those who, like Habakkuk, watch and wait in strong faith. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (I Cor. xvi. 13). Because the time is short and the deliverance certain, we must maintain faith. Like Habakkuk, we may have no understanding of what is happening, but like him we may be steadied by an overwhelming conviction that the Lord is high above all (ii. 13, 20). We must, in a right way, "keep silence before him". The man of faith must cease from murmuring and fuss, to wait in quiet confidence for God's own time.

WHAT HE PRAYED

This brings us to the prayer of iii. 2: "O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, In the midst of the years make it known." There was a past experience of God's power when "God came . . ." (iii. 3). There is to be a future exercise of that power when "He that cometh shall come . . ." (Heb. x. 37). And there is the time in between, the "yet a very little while", the "midst of the years". It is this middle time, this present interlude which calls for some new demonstration of God's working. Dispensationally we are in that period which is twice called "the midst of the years". In actual experience many of us are in a between period, unable to return to the beginnings when God was so much in evidence, and still having to wait for the great end, when we know that we shall see His power and great glory. This is the most testing time when it would be easy to faint and give up. The man of faith must

not do this; he must hold on; and even as he does so he must labour in prayer for a new visitation from God, a truly spiritual 'revival'.

We notice that the prayer is not directed to any work of man's. It is not 'our work' which must be maintained. So often the Lord takes up a man or a group for some specific task, and has no intention that their work should continue indefinitely. But the natural heart cannot bear to be set aside. The natural prayer tends to concentrate on the maintaining or recovery of 'our work'. Not so Habakkuk. He has one simple and direct request to make, and it is that there should be new impetus to God's work without conditions or preferences concerning the way in which He may choose to do this.

In that case, we could argue, Israel would have to be set aside. They had failed the Lord so lamentably that there could be no justification for asking Him still to use them. No justification? Well, yes, there is still one plea which can be made, it is a plea based on God's mercy: "In wrath remember mercy". Emptied of all pride and self-strength, God's servant must confess that the only argument for his prayer is one based on an appeal to the pure mercy of God. This and this alone, makes it possible for the Lord to take up again the instrument which has so sadly failed Him. We must get much lower on our faces before God if we are to have any reviving. This is how the righteous man lives by his faith, he bases all his expectations on the infinite grace of God.

WHAT REVIVAL INVOLVES

'Revival' is a very wide term, capable of many interpretations. Habakkuk prayed that "in the midst of the years" God would "make it known". We may reasonably ask what he was expecting to see. When we pray this prayer what may we expect to receive in answer?

Surely the first and most important need among God's people is a reviving of true fellowship. At the beginning when "God came . . .", the first Church was outstanding in this respect. It had its great preachers, it gave opportunity for many to exercise spiritual gifts, but the supreme blessing and testimony of those days was found in the warmth and strength of the fellowship of all believers. It will be like that at the end. When He who is our 'vision' comes, it will be to meet a raptured Church to be brought into the closest possible intimacy with Himself: "So shall we ever be with the Lord." If this is true of the begin-

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ning and of the end, then this, surely, should be the first sphere of reviving among us "in the midst of the years". Perhaps there is no greater need among Christians than the need for a pure spirit of fellowship. Certainly there is no matter which is more craftily attacked by evil powers.

Another striking feature of those first days was the spirit of praise which was everywhere in evidence. It was as though ordinary human language could not express the overflowing hearts of the believers so that special "tongues" alone seemed adequate to sound the high praises of the Lord Jesus. "Day by day . . ." "in the temple" and "at home" they had a constant feast of glad rejoicing (Acts ii. 46). Even when they were scandalously treated, nothing could silence their song (Acts v. 41). There was immediate alarm among "the twelve" when murmuring arose, and quick action to remove its cause (Acts vi. 1). Grumbling, criticisms, sulking, these are the features of the world all around us; the Church is not of this world, it is an assembly of brothers whose Praise-Leader is Christ Himself (Heb. ii. 12). And so it was in those early days when by His Spirit, "God came . . ." It will be so at the end. Every glimpse which John had into the coming glory was characterized by joy and music, as the book of the Revelation clearly shows. Judged by this standard, we badly need a revival in this present middle period, not merely a revival of choral or

community singing, but a revival of radiant gladness. It seems that this revival had already begun in Habakkuk's heart, for this prayer of chapter iii developed spontaneously into a hymn of praise, so much so that the prophet was able to terminate it with the inscription: "To the Chief Musician, on my stringed instruments." This is what we should look for.

Finally, we must surely say that the greatest need is for a new pre-occupation with the Person of Christ. He is "the vision" who will not now tarry much longer. And when He comes the multitude of lesser and petty concerns which so mar our life and testimony will be altogether forsaken and forgotten. Christ alone will fill our vision. It was like that at the beginning. They had no schools of thought, no personal ambitions or self-importance, no setness of mind. They were ready for anything. They had to be. Christ is so much bigger than all our ideas that when we are committed to Him we can never tell what will happen next. He leads and by His grace we follow.

This, then, is the revival for which we should be praying, a new awareness of Jesus Christ and active submission to Him. No doubt we all need more light. The far greater need, however, is that the light we have should be working out. Let us follow the prophet to his place of prayer, and let us appeal anew for the powerful and merciful intervention of our God in "the midst of the years".

H. F.

HORIZONED BY RESURRECTION

CHAPTER TWO

Reading: Mark xvi. 9; John xx. 1, 11-18; I Cor. xv. 3-8.

demonstrated in the cases of His contact during that period. The first in order was

THE CHANGE MADE BY RESURRECTION

THE forty days after the Resurrection established a new spiritual régime. The end of the phase of Christ's earthly life has—from some standpoints and in some ways—to have "Failure" written over it—failure in the world: failure with the disciples: failure of His teaching: failure of His works: failure of His claims. These failures were due to the natural and earthly level or horizon within which those concerned were living. It was in themselves that He was "straitened"; their spiritual bondage and mental darkness. The forty days were not only evidence of His resurrection, but of the change which resurrection makes. This is

(I) MARY MAGDALENE

The record seems to be quite precise about this priority and precedence. Much that is sentimental has been made of it. Viewed from the standpoint of our present purpose, that is, the spiritual change by resurrection, there is little doubt that this priority is the right one. It does contain the most definite and emphatic change of position and footing in resurrection.

The words of the risen Lord to Mary were certainly not a rebuff, as they seem to be. This was surely not a time or occasion for a rebuff, when, apparently, the Lord allowed other women to take Him by the feet, and invited Thomas to touch Him,

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and disciples to "handle" Him. There must be something special here. As we see it, it is nothing less than the change in dispensation, to which He had so often alluded and given intimation, as, for instance, with the woman at Sychar's well (John iv. 21, 23).

Some have explained it on the basis of His further words: "For I have not yet ascended . . ." Whether this pre-ascension ascension be true or not, the real meaning is not in our text as translated—"Touch me not"; but, as the margin corrects—"Lay not hold on me".

After all that Mary had experienced and gone through His words would imply that she was not letting Him go again, not even to the Father! She had got Him back, and she was keeping Him. This would have reversed all His teaching, and this would have been to her own very serious loss. It pointed to

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It represented the change from the outward to the inward, which is the very essence of the new order. It represented the change from the earthly to the heavenly, which is equally characteristic of this dispensation. "I go", He had said. Mary's attempted hold meant, "I will not let you go". Here, once more, we are in the presence of that incorrigible tendency and habit of the natural man, the man of soul rather than spirit, to bring Christ and heavenly things down to earth in some form that can be held by man. This is the way of systematization, formality, crystallization, organization, and aspects of materialism: the 'we must do something' propensity; we must attach titles, reputations, symbols of success, human honours, and a thousand-and-one other things to Christ to give substance to Him in this world. How impossible it is for well-meaning and even deeply-devoted people, like Mary, to keep their hands off spiritual things. How well-nigh impossible it is to believe that the Lord can do anything without the aid of organization, publicity, advertisement, committees, etc.

But His best and most real work has been, and still is, without all this. There are works of God, beautiful, fruitful, and powerful, of which you will never read in the press, secular or religious. That such should be come upon often provokes astonished exclamations—"But we have never read about this in the press". "Why have you never published this?"

Somehow man's flesh must insinuate itself into heavenly things and draw them to himself. There

is a battle related to keeping things truly spiritual and all of God. The risen Lord will not put Himself in the hands that want to use Him in *any* way to make something for man's soul-gratification.

There is a holding which is unto loss: there is a letting go which is unto gain.

Ask Abraham. Ask David. Ask Paul. Yes, above all, ask Jesus.

If there is tragedy in Church history, surely it can be traced to this very earth-gravitation. The two letters to Timothy clearly point to the beginnings of this down-grade movement; this change from the pure spirit to the clericalism and secularism which took possession as the Apostolic age was closing. It was with this that John was contending in *all* of his writings.

As with Israel and Saul in days of spiritual declension, it is ever and always—"make us . . . like unto . . ." It can even be—"make churches like unto New Testament churches"! And so a certain technique, form, practice, etc., is established, without the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit, the anointing, and the heaven-given instruments. It is all dead, imitation, make-believe, and artificial.

Mary Magdalene wept because—"They have taken away my Lord". Jesus asked why the tears. Really He was given to her in a fuller, more intimate, and more enduring way than ever before. Heaven took Him away later, but Mary did not weep then. She came to see the immense gains and advantages of the changed dispensation.

What an immense content this first appearance of the risen Lord has! We do not read things *into* it. The whole later New Testament shows this to be its meaning. In that tearful and yet glorious eternal few moments the Lord laid the foundation, and established the principle of His relationship to the Church for the whole of a new dispensation; a dispensation horizoned by resurrection.

(II) THE TWO ON THE EMMAUS ROAD *Luke xxiv. 13 - 31.*

This story of the Emmaus Road could be described as the story of seven-and-a-half miles transformed by a touch of the Risen Lord.

These two were disciples; probably living at Emmaus. Many efforts have been made to identify them, especially the unnamed one, but with unconvincing results. At some time, somewhere, they had come into disciple-relationship with Jesus. There must have been a first outward eventful journey which ended in this relationship, and perhaps a period before returning home. This period

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of accompanying with Him either created or stimulated their hopes and led them to the conclusion—"We hoped that it should be he who would redeem Israel". They came to esteem Him as "a prophet, mighty in deed and word". Then clouds began to gather on the horizon, and rumblings of the coming storm became increasingly audible. At length the storm broke. He was taken and cruelly killed and laid in the tomb. Their hopes were shattered. The vision was desolated. Their Sun was in eclipse. Their minds were bewildered. After a day or two they heard some rumours that He was alive, but rumours are not enough to mend and restore broken hearts and desolated lives. So—"Let us go home". "Let us get away from it all, and think."

Thus on their mournful and so-different, homeward journey, as they talk in melancholy and hushed tones, the Stranger joins them. He asks a question. Then with deft touch He helps them to their own conclusions, that is, the conclusions of the Scriptures with which they were already familiar. A touch of reproach and then the matchless exposition. Was there ever such a 'Bible Reading'? The embers upon their hearts which had almost died began to glow afresh as He talked; the dawn sent streaks of new light across their horizon—a dawn at eventide. 'Come in', they said as they reached home, and He made as if He would go further. 'Come in and abide.' We know the rest—the simple repast: the mysterious something bringing back a memory so vividly: the rent Heaven, the recognition, and He is gone.

Never were seven-and-a-half miles of familiar and lately despairingly-sombre travel so transformed. A light heart takes miles off the road says the song.

There are some *incidentally* helpful things here.

1. The Risen Lord knows *where* we are.
2. The Risen Lord knows *how* we are.

3. The Risen Lord knows what we need.

4. The Risen Lord is the answer to all our need.

The Risen Lord is new light; new hope; new motive; new energy; new testimony.

But when we have said all that, we have not touched the heart of this event.

Note. 1. These men knew the Scriptures; that is assumed.

2. These men had a knowledge of 'Jesus of Nazareth'.

(a) They had been associated with Him.

(b) They knew His teaching and His works.

This represented a considerable fulness. But, they were none the better for it all in the day of crisis. They were 'straitened in themselves', and 'He was straitened in them'. They lacked spiritual 'understanding', and upon that deficiency they foundered.

But the "many things" which He had said that He had to say to them, but could not, are now released.

Why? and How? Because the law of spiritual release is that we must go through experience so deep that we *must* know or die; we must be in a condition which makes revelation the only way of life and survival. Our souls must be broken. It is not enough to possess objective knowledge, by ear and eye. It is not enough to have pain and despair when our ideas and ambitions suffer a set-back and reverse. What we *must* have is an experience of resurrection in a spiritual way. We must have an open Heaven, which means

(a) A new Lord.

(b) A new Bible.

(c) A new anointing.

(d) A new commission and vocation.

This is what vital union with the Risen Lord, in the power of the Spirit, means.

T. A-S.

(to be continued)

WITHIN AND WITHOUT

"Them that are without" (Col. iv. 5).

THAT is, of course, an expression for the non-Christian world; the outsiders who are beyond the pale of the Church. There was a very broad line of distinction between it and the surrounding world in the early Christian days, and the handful of Christ-

ians in a heathen country felt a great gulf between them and the society in which they lived. That distinction varies in form, and varies somewhat in apparent magnitude according as Christianity has been rooted in a country for a longer or a shorter

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time, but it remains, and is as real to-day as it ever was, and there is neither wisdom nor kindness in ignoring the distinction.

The phrase here used may sound harsh, and might be used, as it was by the Jews, from whom it was borrowed, in a very narrow and bitter spirit. Close corporations of any sort are apt to generate . . . a hostile contempt for outsiders, and Christianity has too often been misrepresented by its professors, who have looked down upon them that are without with supercilious and unchristian self-complacency.

There is nothing of that sort in the words themselves; the very opposite is in them. They sound to me like the expression of a man conscious of the security and comfort and blessedness of the home where he sat, and with his heart yearning for all the houseless wanderers that were abiding the pelting of the pitiless storm out in the darkness there. The spirit and attitude of Christianity to such is one of yearning pity and urgent entreaty to come in and share in the blessings. There is deep pathos in the words, as well as solemn earnestness, and in such a spirit I wish to dwell upon them now.

I begin with the question: Who are they that are outside? And what is it of which they are outside?

As I have already said, the phrase was apparently borrowed from Judaism, where it meant, 'outside the Jewish congregation', and its primary application, as used here, is no doubt to those who are outside the Christian Church. But do not let us suppose that that explanation gets to the bottom of the meaning of the words. It may stand as a partial answer, but only as a partial. The evil tendency which attends all externalising of truth in the concrete form of institutions works in full force on the Church, and ever tempts us to substitute outward connection with the institution for real possession of the truth of which the institution is the outgrowth. Therefore I urge upon you very emphatically—and all the more earnestly because of the superstitious overestimate of outward connection with the outward institution of the Church which is eagerly proclaimed all around us to-day—that connection with any organized body of believing men is not 'being within', and that isolation from all these is not necessarily 'being without'. Many a man who is in the organization is not 'in the truth', and, blessed be God, a man may be outside of all churches, and yet be one of God's hidden ones, and may dwell safe and instructed in the very innermost shrine of the secret place of the Most High. We hear from priestly

lips . . . that there is 'no safety outside the Church'. If by Church be meant the whole company of those who are trusting to Jesus Christ, of course there is no safety outside, because to trust in Jesus is the one condition of safety, and unless we belong to those who so trust we shall not possess the blessing. So understood, the phrase may pass, and is only objectionable as a round-about and easily misunderstood way of saying what is much better expressed by "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

But that is not the meaning of the phrase in the mouths of those who use it most frequently. To them the Church is a visible corporation, and not only so, but as one of the many organizations into which believers are moulded, it is distinguished from others by certain offices and rites, bishops, priests, and sacraments, through whom and which certain grace is supposed to flow, no drop of which can reach a community otherwise shaped.

Nor is it only——, and——who are in danger of externalising personal Christianity into a connection with a church. The tendency has its roots deep in human nature, and may be found flourishing as rankly in the least sacerdotal of the 'sects'. There is very special need at present for those who understand that Christianity is an immensely deeper thing than connection with any organized body of Christians, to speak out the truth that is in them, and to protest against the vulgar and fleshly notion which is forcing itself into prominence in this day when societies of all sorts are gaining such undue power, and religion, like much else, is being smothered under forms. External relationships and rites cannot determine spiritual conditions. It does not follow because you have passed through certain forms, and stand in visible connection with any visible community, that you are therefore within the pale and safe. Churches are appointed by Christ. Men who believe and love naturally draw together. The life of Christ is in them. Many spiritual blessings are received through believing association with His people. Illumination and stimulus, succour and sympathy pass from one to another, each in turn experiencing the blessedness of receiving, and the greater blessedness of giving. No wise man who has learned of Christ will undervalue the blessings which come through union with the outward body which is a consequence of union with the unseen Head. But men may be in the Church (*so called*) and outside of Christ. Not connection with it, but union with Him brings us 'within'.

We may put the answer to this question in an-

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other form, and going deeper than the idea of being within a visible church, we may say. 'those that are without' are they who are outside the Kingdom of Christ.

The Kingdom of Christ is not a visible external community. The Kingdom of Christ, or of God, or of Heaven, is found wherever human wills obey the Law of Christ, which is the will of God, the decrees of Heaven; as Christ Himself put it, in profound words—profound in all their simplicity—when He said: "Not every one that saith unto me Lord! Lord! shall enter in the Kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father, which is in heaven." 'Them that are without' are those whose wills are not bent in loving obedience to the Lord of their spirit . . .

I venture to take another Scripture-phrase as being the one satisfactory fundamental answer to the question: What is it that these people are outside of? . . .

If you will take your New Testament as your guide you will find that the one question upon which all is suspended is this: Am I, or Am I not in Jesus Christ? Am I in Him, or Am I outside of Him?

They that are outside are not the 'non-Christian world' who are not 'church members'; they that are inside are not the 'Christian world' who make an outward profession of being in the Kingdom . . . but they 'that are within' are those who have simple trust upon Jesus Christ as the sole and all-sufficient Saviour of their sinful spirits and the life of their life, and having entered into that great love, have plunged themselves, as it were, into the very heart of Jesus; have found in Him righteousness and peace, forgiveness and love, joy and salvation. Are you in Christ because you love Him and trust your soul to Him? If not, if not, you are amongst those 'that are without' though you be ever so much joined to the visible 'Church'.

A. McL. (SELECTED)

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

SEARCH AND RESCUE

WHEN Commander Scott Carpenter and his capsule, Aurora Seven, bobbed around in the Atlantic on May 24th, there were millions of people who knew that he was lost, and yet who could do nothing about it.

A slight deviation in direction or else a short delay in firing the rockets, had meant that the capsule did not come down in the expected landing area. In fact nobody knew for certain whether it had come down at all, for all touch with the man inside had been lost. Millions of people waited anxiously for news of him, but no news came. He was completely lost. All the scientists who had followed his course round the earth could do nothing for him. If he was asking for help, they could not hear him, nor did they know where to look. All the ships stationed in the recovery area were powerless to rescue him, for they had no information as to where he was.

We know, however, that help came. He was rescued. Quickly the news went round the world that Commander Scott Carpenter had been saved. How did it happen? Well, on the capsule there was a British-made piece of equipment which kept on sending out signals of distress. It was known as SARAH, short for Search-And-Rescue-And-Homing. As Scott Carpenter sat there on his life-raft, floating about in the great Atlantic Ocean,

SARAH kept on sending out its message of distress.

But who could hear the message? Only those who were within 65 miles' range, and then only if they had special receiving equipment. Of course, when the astronaut was missing, planes with this special equipment were sent out to search for him. Round and round they flew, in a vast area of the mighty ocean, unable to see the lost capsule, but listening eagerly for the signals for help.

At last, to the relief of his family and friends, yes, and of people in many other lands besides the U.S.A., one of the aeroplanes reported that the message had come through and was being followed up. The capsule was floating in the sea. Now one of the special features of the receiving equipment of SARAH is a cathode-ray tube inside the aircraft, to show whether the signals are coming from the right or the left. This made it possible to do the 'Homing', which means the travelling direct to the spot where the call comes from. So it was that at last the aeroplane got near enough for its pilot to report that he could actually see Scott Carpenter. He was sitting in his raft beside the capsule, and he had waved to show that he was well.

Saved! That is a wonderful word. Not that this first plane actually saved him. No! that could only search for him and locate him. Another

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machine, a giant Helicopter, had to come and lift him from the water and carry him away to safety. Yet a third plane was necessary before he was really safe back in his home and with his friends. The first aircraft searched for him, the second lifted him from the water, and then carried him to a waiting warship. And finally the third aircraft carried him back to land.

Think of Scott Carpenter while he was being lifted up into the helicopter. How thankful he must have felt. He could look down and say, "I have been saved". He could also think of the happy moment at the end of his journey and say, "I shall be saved". Yet even while the process was going on it would have been quite true for him to have affirmed, "I am at this moment being saved".

So it is for all believers in the Lord Jesus. They can rightly say, "I have been saved". There is also the present tense, for salvation is a present experience, so that every true believer can affirm, "I am now being saved". Then, as they look forward to the heavenly home to which they are journeying, they can say in hope, "I shall yet be saved".

It took three pilots to save Scott Carpenter. There was the Search pilot, with his special equipment enabling him to hear the call for help and to locate the lost astronaut. Then there was the Hover pilot, with power not only to go where he was, but also to lift him to safety. Finally there

was the Home-going pilot, whose task it was to get him back to his Base in the U.S.A. For us there is only one Saviour, but He can do all three things.

The Lord Jesus is our Search Pilot. He can seek us out and find us when we are lost, hearing our cry for help when nobody else can, and knowing how to come quickly to our aid. "In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple also, and came down . . . he flew swiftly . . ." (Ps. 18. 6 - 10).

He is also our Hover Pilot, the one who can hover over us and take us out of danger into safety. He is the only one with power to lift the sinner. "He sent from on high, he took me; he drew me out of many waters" (Ps. 18. 16).

The Lord Jesus is our Home-going Pilot. He has promised to carry us safely on until at last we are at home with Him in the glory. "He brought me forth also into a large place" (Ps. 18. 19). Through Him we can say, "I have been saved", "I am being saved" and also "I shall yet be saved".

For the American everything depended on SARAH calling out for help. For us everything depends on our being willing to call on the Name of the Lord Jesus as our Saviour. "I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised; so shall I be saved . . ." (Psalm 18. 3).

Have you called on Him yet?

H. F.

PAUL'S EMPHASIS ON THE CROSS

"Before whose eyes Jesus Christ was placarded among you . . . crucified." (Galatians iii. 1).

BOTH Professor Eadie and Bishop Lightfoot prefer the word 'placarded' to the phrase 'evidently set forth' of the A.V. of this verse. We think this rendering is better than Weymouth's 'vividly portrayed', although he certainly improves on the A.V. Where one word can be used to convey the meaning of the writer a phrase is superfluous. The backsliding of his Galatian converts had filled the soul of the Apostle with astonishment and alarm. Hence this letter of remonstrance, entreaty, and warning. The one thing on which his whole ministry was based—the Cross—was being set aside as worthless.

They were drifting back again at the bidding of false teachers to legalism and its bondage. He professes that such conduct is to him incomprehensible. They must have come under the spell of some

witchery to have so soon and so easily lost their hold of the truth. "O senseless Galatians, who bewitched you?" he cries in mingled pain and wonder. 'You', he seems to say, 'You of all men, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was placarded among you . . . crucified!'

We do not dwell, however, on the circumstances which evoked this remonstrance. We turn rather to notice the emphasis placed upon the Cross in the Apostle's ministry.

THE NATURE OF THE EMPHASIS ON THE CROSS

To begin with, let us be clear about one thing. Paul's intellectual greatness. About that, both his friends and enemies are agreed. The fact that the Jews of his day sent their best teachers, men of high intellectual calibre, to dog his steps and traverse his preaching, proves that they recognized

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his intellectual power to be of no ordinary kind. Wherever he came, men found themselves in the grip of an intellectual giant. He was a brilliant organizer. He was commonsense embodied. He was a formidable debater. As a trained thinker he had no rival, while, about his learning, there has never been but the one opinion, that he was the outstanding scholar of his day.

We say these things simply because a man like this was not likely to lay a false emphasis upon the Cross.

If a man of his gigantic intellectual powers, and of his unique commonsense, made the Cross *the centre of all his teaching*, we may be absolutely sure that the Cross REQUIRED this place of pre-eminence. Nay, more, we may be sure that it will always require it, as long as there are sinners to be saved and saints to be kept.

Of course, if there are neither sinners nor saints in the world, then to preach the Cross is wasted time and strength, for *it is only in relation to sinners and saints*, that there has ever been a Cross at all.

THE FORM OF THE EMPHASIS

Let us notice precisely the form that Paul's emphasis on the Cross assumes. He calls it here '*placarding the Cross before their eyes*'.

Nobody in Paul's day—any more than in ours—needed to be told what PLACARDING meant.

The Ancients as well as the Moderns, knew how to advertise important things and events. In our own day placarding has come almost to be a fine art. And the philosophy of it all is, that it is meant to arrest attention; to impress the mind; to capture conviction; to secure action.

Of course, Paul uses the word 'placarding' here not in its literal but figurative sense, but this makes no difference to the fact of the emphasis. He reminds his Galatian converts of what they very well knew, that his preaching of "Christ crucified" had been so vivid, so realistic, so arresting, so impressive, so convincing, so practical, so effective, that they had no difficulty in realising the picture for themselves, and in seeing with the eye of the mind the whole crucifixion scene. Nay, more, so effective had it been that it had won them over to Christ as their Saviour and Lord, and made the Cross precious to them as the instrument of their eternal salvation.

THE REASONS FOR THIS EMPHASIS

Paul was always able to give a reason for the faith that was in him, and for all his actions. In-

deed, he almost goes out of his way to adduce his reasons for these continual exaltations of the Cross. They may be summed up generally in four great statements.

1. THE CROSS IS THE CENTRE OF THE UNIVERSE

You remember his words to the Colossians:—

"God purposed through Him to reconcile the universe to Himself, making peace through His blood, which was shed upon the Cross—to reconcile through Him, I say, things on earth and things in heaven" (Col. i. 19, 20).

And in this reason he takes his place side by side with the Apostle John, when he declared Christ to be "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." That is to say, 'the Cross belongs to eternity rather than to time, and with awful significance stretches with easy and terrible reach, not only forward to the last moment which shall pass on earth, but back before the foundation of the world.'

2. THE CROSS IS THE CENTRE OF THE WORLD'S HISTORY

To the Romans he wrote:—

'No distinction is made; for all men alike have sinned, and all consciously come short of the glory of God, gaining acquittal from guilt by His free unpurchased grace through the deliverance which is found in Christ Jesus. He it is whom God has put forward as a Mercy Seat, rendered efficacious through faith in His Blood.'

3. THE CROSS IS THE CENTRE OF THE CHURCH'S HISTORY

To the Philippians he wrote:—

'He became obedient unto death—even the death of the Cross . . . that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.'

4. THE CROSS IS THE CENTRE OF THE BELIEVER'S LIFE

To the Galatians he said:—

'God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world hath been crucified unto me and I unto the world.'

And to them also he said:—

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life

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which I NOW live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

These reasons hold good for us all to-day just as much as for Paul, and I want to call your attention to the lessons they have for us.

THE LESSONS OF THIS EMPHASIS

1. THE MORAL MAJESTY OF THE CROSS

Look again at the first two reasons of Paul, viz.:

- (a) The Cross the Centre of the Universe,
- (b) The Cross the Centre of the World,

and reflect for a moment. Let me PLACARD Christ before your eyes once more. Who is He? GOD IN CHRIST. And now, *watch the stroke of death as it falls on Him.* What has happened? What could happen to *God in Christ*? In that moment—

(i) *The Cross reached up to God.* And what did it say to HIM? It said to Him—'Thou art the HOLY God.' 'Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity.' It said *this*: 'We, the world of sinners, accept JUDGMENT—as it has fallen on Christ—as *the only adequate acknowledgment of a holy God in a sinful world.*' We shall never understand the full significance of the Cross until we see it as the outcome of the divine holiness. In this sense the Cross was God's act. The value of the Cross to God was that it disclosed and vindicated His unchangeable holiness.

But was that all? No, it changed God's action toward us. His heart needed no change. His love was always the same, and so was His grace. But NOW His treatment of us could be different. His love could operate to change US and bring us into His own perfect holiness. But

(ii) *The Cross reached down to man.* Look again!

Who is on that Cross? CHRIST. Who is He?

The Son of Man! So that *humanity* is on that Cross. Yes! in the person of Christ the Last Adam, the Head of the race, our race is there. And in Him our race is, on that Cross, redeemed, and the whole moral relation of our race to God is changed. But why lay stress on this? Our Christianity is a RELIGION OF REDEMPTION or it is nothing. If Christianity is only a religion of improvements, giving men only better food, wages, clothing, homes, and pure environments, then it is a sham and a failure, an imposition and a delusion.

No! No! it is a redemption or nothing. This alone meets the need of the world, for the world needs an ETERNAL CENTRE for its life, and an ETERNAL AUTHORITY for its assurance, and it finds these only in the Cross.

2. THE SAVING POWER OF THE CROSS

Let me conjoin Paul's last two reasons.

- (a) The Cross the Centre of the Church's history.
- (b) The Cross the Centre of the Believer's life

Let me placard Christ again.

Look at this Church! Follow it through the ages and what do you see?—A CHURCH WITH A CROSS IN THE CENTRE. Why so? Because the Church is not a band of disciples, but a body of believers. Believers in what? Believers in whom? In a salvation which does not save? In a Christ who has not redeemed? Surely not! But a Cross which does not say weakly, 'God is ready to forgive', but mightily, 'God has redeemed.'

Look at the individual believer!

"I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live". What has the Cross done there? Set the soul free from the powers of sin, Satan, the world, the flesh, and filled it with Christ.

Brethren, men are trying to run the kingdom WITHOUT THE CROSS to-day. It cannot be done. The Cross alone gives moral freedom. The Cross alone gives eternal life.

W. D. M.

TRUTH IN THE INWARD PARTS

"Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts"
(Psalm li. 6).

PSALM 51 might well have as its title

DE PROFUNDIS.

It is here that the Psalmist reaches the deepest depths of sorrow and remorse. The bottom is

touched when it is a question of "bloodguiltiness", for, in all the provisions for sin in the Mosaic ritual, there is no provision for bloodguiltiness; death alone is the answer. This is what David knows and is facing in this Psalm because of the episode over Uriah the Hittite (II Sam. xi - xii). David well knew that the mercy of God had to go deeper than

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death ; death which was his due. In his deep agony David has come to a vital question or issue. It is here that "Deep calleth unto deep". Deep suffering calls for a deep solution, if the suffering is related to sin. The solution is that in verse six : "thou desirest truth in the inward parts". To reach that deepest place and solution God uses our failures and wrongs.

There is a

PROGRESSIVENESS IN GOD'S DEALINGS

In the course of our spiritual history God deals with us in ever-deepening ways. Down, down, down, He goes, until He touches bottom to have things true at our very depth. He undercuts all our professions, doctrines, assumptions, pretensions, illusions, and customs.

There is no mere formalism about this ; no mere Jewish ritual in this ; no mere outward observance of rites and ceremonies in this! No! This has got to go right into the inmost being, in the *inward* parts. God works toward that. God is ever working toward the most inward parts. Do you recognize that? Do you understand what He is doing with us? Oh, He will meet us with blessing on a certain level, as we walk before Him, like the man in Psalm i. He will meet us with His gracious provision when we transgress and trespass and fail, and do wrong—He will meet us there in grace. But God is going to pursue this matter to the most inward place of our being, and register there His work of grace and redemption.

"Thou desirest . . .", and David did not come to that until he reached the profoundest, the deepest place of need, of failure, of conscious weakness and worthlessness. Then he cried. It is not enough to just please God in ordinary ways ; it is not enough to observe the ritual of the Law, and go to the ceremonies, and carry out all that which is external. God is after truth in the *inward* parts, right down into the depths of our being. Why? Why? Because truth is a major feature and constituent of the Divine nature. God is called the God of Truth ; Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Godhead, called Himself the Truth—"I am . . . the truth"; "To this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth"; the Holy Spirit is described as the Spirit of Truth—"when he, the Spirit of truth, is come . . .". The Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are characterized by this one feature—truth! And God desires and has set His heart upon having people who are partakers of the Divine nature, and so He is working

ever more deeply toward this end: what is true of Himself shall be true of His children—those begotten of Him—that they should be *true* sons of God in this sense.

ALL UNTRUTH IS SATANIC

Satan is described as the liar and the father of lies. For that reason all untruth is an abomination to God. God has consigned all liars to the lake of fire ; He has excluded from the New Jerusalem everything that maketh a lie. God hates everything that is not true, and true right through and through like Himself. He must have truth in the inward parts.

The interference of Satan with God's creation—man—resulted in man becoming something false where God is concerned: he is a misrepresentation of God's mind ; and he is a deceived creature. "The god of this age", says Paul, "hath blinded the mind of the unbelieving". Man is a deceived, blinded creature ; but God desires "truth in the inward parts".

Now, you see how large a matter this is, and one is hard-pressed to know what to say, and what not to say about it. But let us dwell for a moment upon this clause "the inward parts"—the *inward* parts. You will detect in this Psalm that that is running right through. Here it is: "create in me a clean *heart*"; "renew a right *spirit* within me"; "a broken *spirit* and a contrite *heart* thou wilt not despise". You see, it is all this innermost realm of things that has now arisen as the *real* need. No more deception, no more falsehood, no more mockery, no more make-believe, no more going on as though it is all right when it is not all right ; no more using external means to cover over inward unreality ; no more going to meetings, and saying prayers, and joining in the whole system, when the inward parts are not right before God. Seeing then that we are what we are by nature now, this represents a re-constituting of us. Anything that does not minister to that is false in itself. Any system of religion that just puts on from the outside, and covers over the inner life by mere rite and ritual is false, it is not true. The work of God is to reconstitute human nature. And that, of course, involves two things.

On the one side, it involves a breaking down. And if you know anything about God's dealings with lives who come into His hands, there is undoubtedly a large place for that—a progressive breaking down ; a getting to the root of things, and undeceiving us. If we have any illusions about our-

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selves, they will all be gone when God has done with us. If we are governed by any kind of falsehood about ourselves, and our position, and our work, when God has done with us, that will all be gone. He is going to break us down until we see ourselves stark, as an unclean thing, with all our righteousnesses as filthy rags. So He will break us down, and He does.

But there is the other side, of course, all the time, for God is not only, and always negative; there is the constructing, bringing up to the place where anything that is false, anything that is not absolutely transparent and true, straight, clear, is hateful to us. More and more our inner man revolts against our own falsehood. Any exaggeration comes back on us at once with conviction of wrong; any false statement hits us hard, and we know that we have not spoken the truth. It is a tremendous thing to get into the hands of the Holy Spirit, until, like God, the one thing that we hate is anything that is false. "I hate", said David, "every false way". We must come there. But we must be lovers of the truth. And this is going to pursue us everywhere; it will pursue us into our own life within ourselves, that we are not deceiving ourselves at all. Before God we know exactly what God thinks about us, and we know where we stand in the light.

TRUTH IN THE SOCIAL LIFE

It will pursue us into our social life, and all our social lies and make-believe will have to come under the hand of God. Oh, what a tremendous amount of falsehood, make-believe, there is in the social realm. What about all the 'make-up'? is it not to make out that you are something that you are not?! to give a semblance of something that is not true? The whole social life is like that; it is a fabric of untruths, and we have many ways of just saying things that really are not true.

TRUTH IN THE BUSINESS LIFE

It pursues us into our business; the lie that gets us a good sale or a good buy—the commercial lie. And so, through and through, God will pursue this matter of truth. Forgive me, but it is a very, very important matter with God. If God does hate what is untrue, and desires truth in the inward parts, how can He bless where there is anything that is false, of any kind at all—His eyes see.

And this is a work of time—indeed, it is a lifelong work. This thing comes more to light, be-

comes more intense, the further on we go. The Lord lets us off with a lot of things as spiritual infants, as we do our children. We know that they are children, and we do not take too much notice of certain things which we know are not quite right. And God is very patient and very tender to bring us on. It would not do to come right in with all the fulness and the exactness of His nature too soon—He spreads it over the whole lifetime. And the nearer we come to the Lord, the more meticulous the Holy Spirit is over this matter of truth; the closer are His dealings with us. It is very true, you see, "perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord"—*perfecting*. The nearer we get to the end, the more stringent will be the Lord's dealings with anything false in our lives. It is a time matter, but God is very faithful—He is very faithful; He does not let things pass. Do we want Him to be faithful? Well, it is not comfortable to say, Yes, but it is good that He should be faithful with every inconsistency, every contradiction, every falsehood, in the inward parts.

That carries the matter deeper than our own natural, moral life. I am not talking about morals now. It is right to be honest; it is right to have integrity; it is right to be straight; it is right to be true, naturally, humanly: but I am not talking about that. This thing goes deeper than our natural moral life at its best, for the simple reason that, by nature, we have not got God's conceptions and God's standards. God's thoughts about things are very different from ours. We would often allow what God would never allow. He has an altogether different point of view about things. We judge in one way about things, and God judges in another. It is necessary for us to come to God's standpoint. Oh, we would say, there is no harm in such-and-such a thing. Oh, there is no wrong in that; look at so-and-so and so-and-so, and we take our standard, perhaps, from other people. We have known people to do that; point to some outstanding figure in the work of God, in whose life was a certain thing—that one has been taken as the model, to be copied, and so the thing has been taken on. Oh, there is no harm in it; look at so-and-so. And I have known lives and ministries to be ruined on that very excuse. The question is: What does the Lord say about it? God says, Walk before Me! Not before any human model; not before any human standard; 'There is no harm in it; so-and-so does it; it is quite a common practice'. No, no! "Walk before me", says the Lord. We have got to get this in the spirit, the inward man. It is deeper than our best moral stan-

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

dards. Otherwise there is no point in it being in the Bible at all, if our moral standards can rise to God's satisfaction—why must we be so handled and reconstituted? It is deeper than our intellect, than our reason. You cannot, by reason or intellect, arrive at God's standard at all. Not at all! Oh, do not think that by any method of reasoning, you are ever going to reach God's standard. You never will. Here, it is only by revelation of the Holy Spirit. Christ has got to be revealed in our hearts by the Spirit. There is no point in Jesus saying: "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth", if we could get there by our own intelligence. Not at all. It must come by the revelation of Christ in our hearts, in the inward parts. This is something spiritual. "God is Spirit; they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in *truth*"—spirit and truth go together. Only what is spiritual, what is of God, is *truth*—only that!

The Apostle Paul had a great intellect, as everybody knows, and he had a very high standard of moral life, but he was an utterly deceived man before his conversion. "I verily thought that I ought . . ." "It was a matter of conscience with

me to do many things contrary . . ." He was conscientious. He could say as concerning the righteousness which is of the Law—blameless! There is a moral standard; there is an intellectual standard; there is a conscientious standard! But it can be all mistaken, deceived. No, that is not the way. It is only by the work of the Holy Spirit Himself in us, changing us, completely changing us. It may be that common honesty, sincerity will be a way along which the Lord can come. I am quite sure, if we are not going to be honest and straight with God, He is not going to meet us, but that will not get us there. He may require the gangway across which to pass to us, the gangway of meaning business with Him, and being thoroughly honest with Him. But let us never think that any sincerity of ours will bring us to be partakers of the Divine nature—not at all! "Thou desirest truth in the inward parts", in the deepest realm of our being—in our spirits.

If we are in a false position we are in great weakness, and our foundation will collapse, sooner or later. But the Lord's way is to deliver us from such.

T. A-S.

LEADERSHIP

"For that the leaders took the lead . . . bless the Lord". (Judges v. 2).

WHILE there are few things fraught with more difficulties, perils, and involvements than leadership, there are few things more vital and necessary. The fact of leadership needs no argument. It is in the very nature of things. Every situation that arises of a serious and critical nature either finds its salvation by the spontaneous forthcoming of the spirit of leadership in someone, or becomes a disaster for want of it. When an emergency arises, people are either paralysed and helpless because there is no one to give a lead, or are galvanized into action or confidence by the right kind of leadership.

But not only in emergencies does this factor show its importance. Both in any enterprise, mission, and service, and in any realm of responsibility, this—which is an elemental principle—invariably shows itself. We have much to say about its nature, its sphere, and its purpose, but first of all it is necessary that we should recognize and accept that leadership is a fact in the very constitution of life and purpose. It has been so from the

beginning, and—in principle (if not in form)—has operated in every realm, not least in the Church.

In its right place, sphere, nature, and relationship it is a *must*; only chaos, confusion, and frustration can obtain where there is no spirit of leadership. Indeed, even where there may be a pretending to the contrary, it will be there somewhere if things are not completely stagnant, or running to seed.

We have known it to be said that leadership is an Old Testament feature, but not in the New Testament. It has also been said—or contended—that, while leadership may obtain in the wider work and enterprise of the Church universal, it has no place or right in the local church. Many will find it hard to understand such arguments, and it is a pity that time and space should have to be taken to take notice of such objections, but there they are, and no dealing with the matter of leadership would be sound until such contentions were dealt with. Those contentions are based upon what is believed to be the essential *corporate* nature of leadership or responsibility in the local church. It is argued—and with truth—that there is One Head only over the Church; that the Holy Spirit is the

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immediate Custodian of that Headship; that the plurality of Elders in the New Testament churches is the law by which all autocracy and personal leadership is ruled out and the leadership of the Holy Spirit in relationship to the alone headship of Christ is preserved. All this is quite true and right, and God forbid that the outworking of anything that we may say should violate those sacred laws.

With all the desire and intention in the world to safeguard the unique and sole rights of Christ and the Holy Spirit in the Church, we still believe that there is an essential place for, and need of, subject and subordinate (to the Lord) leadership. Moreover, this, we believe, not to be out of order, but in the Divine order.

The place and function of the shepherd in the Bible is to "go before", and the sheep "follow after". The Lord is truly the Chief Shepherd, but there are shepherds in the churches, and they have to lead. While James, John, Timothy, were apostles of the churches, they were recognized as having particular responsibility in a local church. If this can be proved to be true in any case, it must be accepted as—(1) expressing a certain personal leadership, and (2) not necessarily violating either the headship of Christ, the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit, or the corporate nature of local responsibility. To argue otherwise is to say that it is impossible to have a corporate body of responsible men who recognize anointing for leadership amongst themselves, and to honour such, while not being under autocratic oppression.

When we have said that, we feel sure that the full answer will be reached as we open out this matter to its greater range. To say that leadership may rightly be recognized in the Church universal but that it must on no account be found in the church local is surely to say that the local church is in this respect separate and different from the Body of Christ as a whole. If the Body as a whole has personal leaders in it legitimately without violating the principle of Christ's unique headship, *must* it be that the spirit of leadership resting upon an individual in the local church of necessity violates that principle? While we most strongly contend against autocracy, we as strongly contend that leadership even amongst responsible brethren is right, *provided always* that it is evidently anointed leadership and of the kind that is approved of God.

Because—in these chapters—we are going to learn much from Old Testament examples, it is necessary to point out another fact in view of an aforementioned objection.

In the Old Testament everything is on a temporal, earthly, and material basis. Leadership was therefore in such a context. But it is of the very essence of Biblical interpretation that nothing was the sum and end in itself. The wood, gold, silver, fabrics, etc., etc., of the Tabernacle did not begin and end with themselves; they represented, and, in a way, embodied spiritual, heavenly, and eternal features, characteristics, and principles. This is true of everything Divinely instituted in the Old Testament. The same was true of the "works", "signs", miracles of Christ. So it was with Old Testament leaders.

With the New Testament, after Christ's ascension, the forms, means, and connections change, but the spiritual principles remain. The Apostles are the Joshuas, Gideons, Nehemiahs, etc. of the new dispensation, but their realm, function, and purpose is spiritual, not temporal. They are undoubtedly spiritual leaders, and their spiritual leadership could function in a local church even for years. This was complementary, and did no violence to any spiritual principle. It would be only creating an artificial technique to put these things into watertight compartments, and say, this and that must not be. The New Testament knows of no such legal or artificial position. Fellowship is the answer to most of the difficulties.

From there we are led to look at the matter of leadership in other *general* ways before we seek to learn from examples.

As is always the case the positive is revealed in its importance by the opposition which it encounters. We have only to consider the *leadership* function of such as Adam, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Nehemiah, Paul, and a hundred others to understand the intense and many-sided antagonism levelled at them. Of course, the Lord Jesus as "the captain of our salvation", i.e., "the file-leader", is the supreme instance. Break, defeat, beguile, seduce, the leader and the battle is won, the forces are helpless. The focus of adverse attention upon leadership is its own testimony to its importance.

Then, in approaching the question of what leadership is, we must say something of what it is not.

Leadership (*in the work of God*) is not firstly on natural grounds. It is not—in the first place—a matter of personality, natural ability, assertiveness, enthusiasm, assumption, strength of mind or will. A blusterer is not a leader. A leader *in God's work* is not made or trained in the schools or academies. That may be so in the world's work, but we are dealing with spiritual leadership. Many

A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

natural things, inherited or acquired, may—or may not—be helpful subsequently, but God's leaders are not essential leaders because of certain natural qualifications. Whatever may or may not be true in the natural realm the fact is that God's leaders are chosen by Him. They, and others, may always have many questions as to why, but that *fact* governs. God only knows why! When God does it, men have either to take account of it and accept it, or in repudiating it to be out of Divine approval. This is very true to the Bible, as we shall see.

What we have just said does not imply that there are no qualities in leaders. They go to school with God, and in a hard school the kind of qualities required by God are inculcated. Another general thing about leaders chosen by God is that they, while being *very* human, are, in many respects, a class by themselves. They are pioneers, and pioneers are lonely people in more respects than one. In some ways they are difficult people. Their standard and measure has to be ahead of others, and as human nature generally likes not to be disturbed, but would seek the easy way, the pioneer is often a bit too much for people. He is restless, never satisfied, always pressing and urging forward. The keynote of his life is "Let us go on". His is not the easy way, and because human nature does want the easy way, the leader is not always popular. The whole nature of man is either downward or to a quiet and happy mean and snugness. The pioneer is therefore not always appreciated, but often very much otherwise. He is so much contrary to this mediocre gravitation. A part of the price of leadership is loneliness.

Leadership is a Divine imperative. In the work of God, true leadership is not by the choice or desire of those concerned. Very often it is against their inclination or desire, especially when they have been in God's 'school of discipline'. Indeed, the man who wants to be a leader, who forces himself into that position, who *assumes* it, and who would not rather be saved from it, will most likely be a menace. It will be clear to all that it is more the man than the Lord. His leadership—such as it will be forced, artificial, and lacking in unction. The God-chosen leader is a 'cannot' man in two ways. Firstly—like Moses and Jeremiah—he will humbly feel and confess, "I cannot". But on the other hand, he will know that he cannot do otherwise, it is a Divine compulsion, a fire in his bones, a urge and energy not of himself. While he is on his job he may give the impression of personal strength, perhaps of efficiency, or even self-assur-

ance, but he and God know the depth of his secret history; the overwhelming consciousness of need and dependence; the awareness of limitation; and the desolating realisation of failure and weakness.

Leaders know deeper depths than any others, and their battle with self-despair is more acute. Yet, it is a part of their leadership and responsibility that they hide their own personal sufferings and sorrows. Like Ezekiel and Hosea they have to anoint their face and, in the hour of deepest sorrow, go before the people "as at other times". The troubles must not get into their voice or manner; if they do, their influence has gone, for, if people are going on to the greater fulnesses of Christ, the supreme virtue is courage, and it is this that a leader *must* inspire. His boldest times before men may be his times of deepest suffering before God. They know that they are involved in the 'impossible', but—in spite of themselves—they are committed, and for them compromise is unthinkable.

While writing this I have come on *The Making of a Pioneer*, by the Misses Cable and French, and in it these lines occur in reference to the Pioneer.

"They are not an easy-going class of people and are subject to an inarticulate urge, the impact of a driving-force pushing them forward to further effort and carrying them into what other men call "impossible situations". "Appointed to pioneer work", is an expression which is a travesty of the true case, for no man can be called a "pioneer" until he has proved himself to be one. The . . . pioneer is heaven ordained, not man appointed."

In this introduction to this great matter, let us just add this, that it is in the very nature of true spiritual leadership that the leader has to have in his own being *through experience* that to which he seeks to lead others. He has gone the way before. He has tasted what he calls others to taste. He is no book leader; what he says to others and urges them toward comes out of his own life at great cost. The artificial 'leader' (?) can say the most extravagant things, can give all the theory and assume all the mannerisms, and he gets away with it and knows little or nothing of the real heartbreak. "The husbandman that laboureth must be the first to partake of the fruits", said Paul, but while this may apply to the reward of labour, it may also apply to the cost.

When we have said all as to that special class of pioneer-leaders in spiritual things, we must point out that, even if we cannot count ourselves among them, you and I should be leaders in the sense that

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we inspire and are an incentive to others to "go on" with the Lord. While "followers", there are always others who can be influenced by us, and— as we shall see in one particular Bible instance—the very essence of leadership is inspiration. May we all be leaders in this sense.

T. A-S.

(to be continued)

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Total £86 18s. 8d.

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Total \$97.95

Calgary, Alta. C.\$2; Orillia, Ont. C.\$2; Wellington, Ont. C.\$1

Total C.\$5

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The wording of the **MOTTO** for 1963 is as follows

BE STILL, and KNOW that I AM GOD:
The LORD of HOSTS is with us.

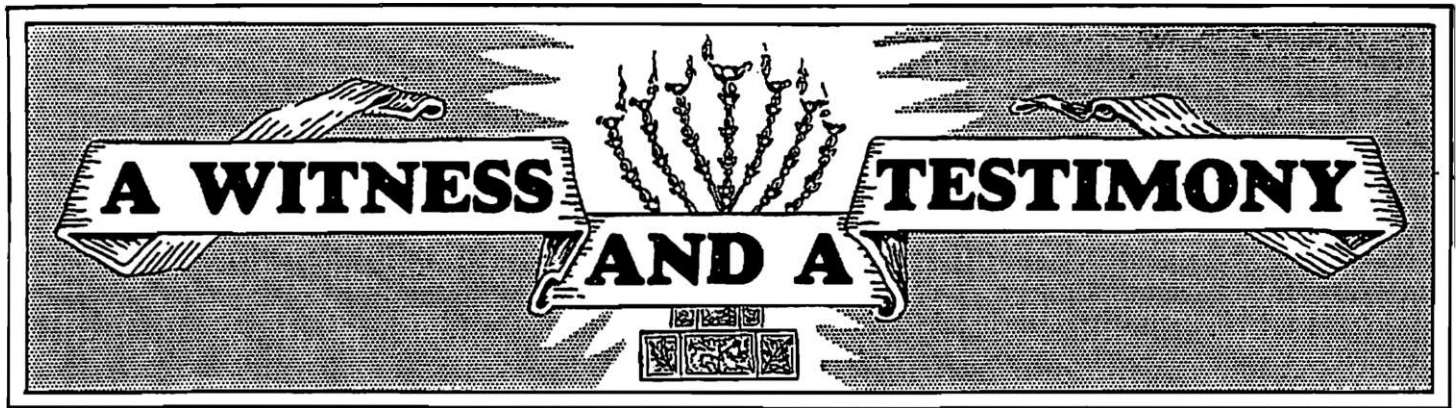
Large: 6d. each (5/6 a dozen)

Postage and packing: on 1—5d.; on 2 to 6—6d.; on 12—8d.

Small: 3d. each (2/6 a dozen)

Postage and packing: on 1 to 12—4d.; 13 to 36—5d.

The Motto Cards will be ready in October, but the heavy demands of past years make it advisable for friends to place their orders early.



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EDITORIAL

THERE are one or two details calling for explanation which we give before striking the editorial note for this issue of the paper.

There seems to be some perplexity in the minds of some of our old friends, who are not nearby, as to the two changes of address which have been announced. It seems that some have thought that the change from No. 13 to No. 39 Honor Oak Road, in the case of the Fellowship Centre, implies that, for some reason, the old 'Home' has been left. The explanation is very simple. With the erection of new houses in the road, the buildings have been renumbered by the post office. So it is just a new number for the same place.

As to the other change, this *is* a removal. Premises which we have used for many years as extra conference accommodation have now become the home of the administrative work of the WITNESS AND TESTIMONY, the LITERATURE, EDITOR'S OFFICE, TAPE RECORDINGS, and such wider ministries as are essentially a part thereof. *No spiritual or fellowship division or separation is represented by this.* The new premises are much more convenient for this than were those in the Centre, and they provide also a more home-like place to which we can welcome friends who want to purchase literature or see us in relation to the work. In the absence of the Editor at any time, Miss GUY and Miss REID, our so valued secretaries, will always be pleased to welcome friends and give what help is desired. (Miss Reid has lately joined Miss Guy in this work.)

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The releasing of the rooms at the Centre will also provide for the development of the work of the local assembly which development is a burden on the hearts of the responsible brethren.

We trust that in both of these aspects the result will prove to be a 'strengthening of stakes and a lengthening of cords', and in that order. Please do take note of the new WITNESS AND TESTIMONY address.

Now for the note referred to at the commencement. God's ways are always equal. That is, they are not ill-proportioned or unbalanced. "The City lies four-square". The dimensions of the love of God are—'length and breadth and height and depth'. Not one dimension is either extended at the cost of another nor diminished to serve another. This is not always so with men; indeed, it is rarely so. Man so often gives primary importance to one of the dimensions. He sometimes sacrifices everything for breadth. This is the feature of Liberalism. It is also the snare of Universalism. There is a subtle paradox here. While—in one sense—God cannot be made bigger than He is, in another sense, He can be made so. When His grace is made to set aside His righteousness and His judgment that is the effect—to make Him untruly great. Sometimes the tendency or actuality is to make height the predominant dimension. The imposing, the impressive, the exalting, the tall and high, etc. is the only interest and concern of much that is associated with the work of God. Two of the dimensions are all too frequently *not* given their due and essential place, with disastrous consequences. This oversight or neglect results in much loss eventually, and a tremendous amount of effort to try to repair the damage. These dimensions are, length, and depth. Length being endurance, and depth being the substantial. These two are inseparable, endurance being the result of depth.

As we come to the last issue of this little paper in this year 1962, we may, perhaps, be allowed to remark that, while never meaning or thinking to *overstress* this one dimension, we are particularly concerned and burdened to restore it to its equal place. Depth *does* matter, dear friends, for the storms and adversities will find out the roots and the foundations. The ministry of spiritual depth is the least popular, and only a *comparatively* few will want it, but it is the ministry of the long-term.

In the final issue the one thing that will come to light will be, how deep did you go?

It needs little pointing out that God's dealings with His people are all in the direction of saving them from superficiality and shallowness, and making them able to "stand, withstand, and having done all, to stand".

May the features of substantiality, reliability, trustworthiness, and endurance be found in us as the winds of testing blow. Perhaps 1963 will make heavy demands upon these qualities.

EDITOR.

THE STEWARDSHIP OF THE MYSTERY

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PLACE OF REVELATION IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST

TOWARD the close of our last chapter we used some words which have been the focal point of much controversy and misunderstanding. The words were: 'no one who has *really* had a revelation of the Body of Christ,' etc.

The misunderstanding has been as to our meaning; the controversy as to the word 'Revelation'.

The contention is that all the revelation that God has wished to give to man is exclusively and conclusively contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and that, therefore, there is no more revelation to be given or had. The misunderstanding is that, in our use of the word

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'Revelation', we mean something extra to the Scriptures. Let us say emphatically that we mean no such thing. Categorically we affirm that the Bible seals the sum of Divine revelation, and anything that is extra to that is dangerous and contrary to the Scriptures themselves.

When, however, we have said that with full emphasis, we still hold to both the fact and the implications of the old Puritan Father, John Robinson, when he said:

"The Lord hath yet more light and truth to break forth from His word."

That is what we mean, and *all* that we mean. We believe that this is the teaching of the Word itself, as we shall show.

It is not 'Revelation' as *extra to* the Scriptures, but revelation as to *what is in* the Scriptures. The content is unfathomable and inexhaustible. The 'riches are unsearchable'. Who can know the full content of the mind of infinite God? It may very well be that, although God has given in the Scriptures all that we *need* to know for all *present purposes*, and eternal well-being, there is infinitely more of God to be known than is contained in the Bible. But, the Bible, although read a thousand times, and even were it entirely committed to memory, contains *for present value and importance* more, much more than the most spiritually knowledgeable servant or saint of God has ever been able to fathom. The man to whom was committed the revelation of the mystery in a fuller way than any other, was, *right at the end of his life*, still crying: "That I may know him".

The Scriptures make two things very clear. One is that the knowledge of the things of God is right outside of human attainment by any natural ability of mind or brain. They show that, although they—the Scriptures—may be quite familiar to, and in the hands of quite devout men, such men may be utterly blind as to their meaning. Among many instances we have the classic case of the two on the road to Emmaus (Luke xxiv). This failure to 'know the voices of the prophets which were *read every sabbath*' was one of the major charges laid against the Jewish rulers (Acts xiii. 27).

The second thing is that the very presence of the Holy Spirit within the *believer* is as the "spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know . . ." (Eph. i. 17, 18). This was the prayer of the Apostle for *believers* who had already received very much instruction and light. And can it be said that all that is contained in that prayer

has been fully known by the Church, even to this day? The things which are detailed in the prayer are truly in the Scriptures, but the Church still needs to know them by revelation of the Holy Spirit. To believers, who already had a rich inheritance of Divine illumination, John the Apostle wrote: 'You have an anointing; the anointing abideth in you and teacheth you all things' (I John ii. 27). The "all things" would already be in the Scriptures, but needing to be brought to light in believers. Let it be noted that this 'Revelation' referred to is not intended to be the exclusive or peculiar property of a selected few, but it is for all believers, and for the Church as a whole. Whether it is enjoyed or experienced by all is another matter, to which we have to come presently.

What does this mean fundamentally and in the first place? It just means that

EVERY BELIEVER SHOULD HAVE A FIRST-HAND KNOWLEDGE OF THE LORD AND HIS THINGS

This means that every believer should, and may, be able to say: 'I really do know the Lord. The Lord has really revealed Himself to me.' Through and by His Word, yes; but it has become a very personal, living, and real thing. Believers, by their very new birth and in its very nature are able to say: 'The Lord has opened my eyes.' But this is not all, as we have pointed out. This work of the Holy Spirit is a continuous and progressive thing, and the 'more light and truth' should be ever growing.

We would say that everything in the Christian life should rest upon and grow out of this revelation or illumination. Life, growth, character, service, etc., should all spring from a basic and continuously growing inward unveiling of Jesus Christ. The Christian should not have his or her life resting upon only outward supports, such as meetings, 'church-attendance', preaching, and the many other things which compose Christianity in an outward way. These may be helps, but the vital necessity and blessed privilege is to have a personal, inward, revealing walk with the Lord. Apart from this, in a day of crisis and shaking, all the other things—however good in themselves—may break down and fail to save.

The Apostle Paul was a master of the Scriptures as they existed. There was very little, if anything, that he could be taught as to their content in word and doctrine. But as to the Christ of which they were full he was totally and lamentably blind. "I

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did it in ignorance", he said. The "mystery" was there all the time, waiting for the manifestation and the revelation of the Christ by the Holy Spirit. To this revelation Paul acknowledged that he owed everything, and *all* that he became, all that he did, and all that the Church has received through him took its rise from "It pleased God to reveal his Son in me"; and from that spring the river ever deepened and widened.

Although the specific dispensational purpose may be peculiar in the sovereignty of God in certain vessels, the principle is of general application: it is that, what we are, what we may fulfil of Divine purpose, and the ultimate value of our lives will depend solely upon what we have seen of Christ by revelation by the Holy Spirit. But, having said that, there is more to say. We have to come to

THE BASIS OF REVELATION.

Although this is the birthright of all children of God, many are not in the good of it, and a vast number know all too little of it. We should be right in saying that a large measure of the spiritual defectiveness, a large number of the spiritual maladies, and a great deal of the discredit brought upon the Church can be traced to this lack of really knowing the Lord in an inward way. If this is the secret of fulness of life and effectiveness of service, what is its basis? For truly there *is* a basis and a very serious one! It embraces the Lord Jesus Himself, with all His disciples and apostles. Jesus received His open Heaven for His mission—in symbol—at the Jordan when He was baptized. John was baptizing unto repentance and remission of sins. Jesus joined the multitude and insisted upon being baptized with them. But Jesus had no sin or sins of which to repent or which needed to be remitted. He was already "the Lamb of God", "without spot or blemish". His baptism was therefore a symbolic forecast of His Cross—death, burial, resurrection, and in both—symbol and reality—He was *representatively* "numbered with the transgressors" (Isa. liii. 12). On this ground the Heaven was opened to Him and thereafter everything for Him was in virtue of that, until that actual terrible moment when—symbolism apart—"He was made sin for us, he who knew no sin"; when *we* were—in the mind of God—included in Him, and Heaven was closed and sealed against sinful mankind and He cried "Forsaken" (Matt. xxvii. 46); when He was "smitten of God and afflicted" (Isa. liii. 4).

After this *actual* representative death and resur-

rection, Heaven was opened to Him in all its eternal fulness. The 'gates were lifted up and the King of glory entered in', (Ps. xxiv. 7, 9). "He was *received* up" (Acts i. 2, 10, 11).

Leaving the atoning and vicarious aspect apart as uniquely His work, the New Testament overwhelmingly shows that there is *an* aspect of that experience into which believers have to be baptized. We say 'experience', for it is more than the doctrine. The first Apostles had a devastating experience of the meaning and power of the Cross. It wrecked them and blasted all their natural self-confidence, self-assurance, and ambitions in this world as it is. Broken, shattered, emptied, and confounded by that Cross, they were thereby in the way of the opened Heaven, which actually became their door of spiritual fulness on the Day of Pentecost.

It is the Apostle Paul who puts all this into writing and exposition. Not because he alone went that way, but because of the sovereign significance of his "stewardship".

We do not know where—the then—Saul of Tarsus was when Jesus was crucified, nor whether he was actively connected with the event, but we do know what he felt about it. He was wholly sympathetic with the crucifying of Jesus, and demonstrated that sympathy by vehemently pursuing, persecuting, and arraigning for death the least and last sponsor of 'Jesus of Nazareth'.

We shall never be fully able to appraise the devastating effect of his discovery that Jesus of Nazareth was—not only the Messiah but—the Son of God crucified by Israel, himself, and the world. But it is clear from his writings that this crucifixion was seen to be more than *for* him and his sins, or for the world and its sins; it was *as* him as a part of a judged and set-aside race and world. Positive statements to this effect are such as Romans vi. 3-6; Colossians ii. 11, 12; Galatians ii. 20; and so on. We repeat, this was not just doctrine or interpretation with Paul, it was born out of an initial prostrating and devastating encounter and revelation, and, quite evidently, from increasing and deepening revelation *and* experience of the Cross as to the natural man. Paul's open Heaven began in this way, and all that followed in knowledge, life, and ministry was upon this basis.

Paul, the natural man, with all his endowments, abilities, zeal, and acquirements, knew that he was at a discount in the things of God apart from this opened Heaven and the Spirit's anointing. The Cross had effected this. He was a crucified man, and he knew it. He was crucified to self; crucified

to the world, its spirit, its ambitions, its policies, its ways. But he was risen and alive to all that Heaven means, and to Christ—Heaven's fulness.

From the natural standpoint this may be a costly way. It involves suffering and ostracism. It involves in the hatred of hell. It involves in the unrelenting attempts to discredit by the legalists, the traditionalists, and by the earthbound.

From some outstanding examples of what we are seeking to show we select one which we are sure will not be called into question by anyone. It is the case of Mr. Hudson Taylor of the China Inland Mission.

Few people, if any, who know of Mr. Hudson Taylor's life with God would question his knowledge of the Scriptures and his real spiritual understanding of them. If he knew the Word of God at all we can be sure that the fifteenth chapter of the Gospel by John was very well known by him, but it was upon that very chapter that, well on in life and service, he was saved from despair and brought into something altogether new of joy and victory. The disclosure of his despair in a letter astounded those who knew him best. His biographers lead up to the letter by saying:—

“Were it not recorded in his own words it would be difficult to believe, certainly impossible to imagine, such conflict, suffering, almost despair in spiritual things in one who had long and truly known the Lord.”

We give a part of the letter in which the disclosure is made, with *our* italics to indicate the particular principle which is our object in this chapter. The whole chapter entitled *The Exchanged Life* should be read to get the fuller message; we are only concerned at the moment with the fact of ‘Revelation’. (The chapter is in *Hudson Taylor. The Growth of a Work of God.*)

“Six weeks after these experiences, when Mr. Taylor was rejoicing in the abiding fulness of this new life, a letter reached him from England that specially touched his heart. It was from his sister, Mrs. Broomhall, the intimate friend and correspondent of his early years, who now with a growing family round her was sore pressed, as he had been himself, by outward responsibilities and inward conflict rather than rest in spiritual things. With a great longing to help one so dear to him, Mr. Taylor took up his pen to reply. As he wrote, the whole story of his own extremity and deliverance was poured out in a letter so precious that it is given in full, despite the risk of some repetition:

“October 17, 1869: So many thanks for your long, dear letter. . . I do not think you have written me such a letter since we have been in China. I know it is with you as with me—you *cannot*, not you *will* not. Mind and body will not bear more than a certain amount of strain, or do more than a certain amount of work. As to work, mine was never so plentiful, so responsible, or so difficult; but the weight and strain are all *gone*. The last month or more has been perhaps, the happiest of my life; and I long to tell you a little of what the Lord has done for my soul. I do not know how far I may be able to make myself intelligible about it, for *there is nothing new or strange or wonderful—and yet, all is new! In a word, “Whereas once I was blind, now I see.”* *

“Perhaps I shall make myself more clear if I go back a little. Well, dearie, my mind has been greatly exercised for six or eight months past, feeling the need personally, and for our Mission, of more holiness, life, power in our souls. But personal need stood first and was the greatest. I felt the ingratitude, the danger, the sin of not living nearer to God. I prayed, agonized, fasted, strove, made resolutions, read the Word more diligently, sought more time for retirement and meditation, but all was without effect. Every day, almost every hour, the consciousness of sin oppressed me. I knew that if I could only abide in Christ all would be well, but I *could not*. I began the day with prayer, determined not to take my eye from Him for a moment; but pressure of duties, sometimes very trying, constant interruptions apt to be so wearing, often caused me to forget Him. Then one's nerves get so fretted in this climate that temptations to irritability, hard thoughts, and sometimes unkind words are all the more difficult to control. Each day brought its register of sin and failure, of lack of power. To will was indeed present with me, but how to perform I found not.

“Then came the question, ‘Is there *no* rescue? Must it be thus to the end—constant conflict and, instead of victory, too often defeat?’ How, too, could I preach with sincerity that to those who receive Jesus, ‘to them gave He power to become the sons of God’ (i.e., God-like) when it was not so in my own experience? Instead of growing stronger, I seemed to be getting weaker and to have less power against sin; and no wonder, for faith and even hope were getting very low. I hated myself; I hated my sin; and yet I gained no strength against it. I felt I *was* a child of God: His Spirit in

* Italics ours.

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my heart would cry, in spite of all, 'Abba, Father': but to rise to my privileges as a child, I was utterly powerless. I thought that holiness, practical holiness, was to be gradually attained by a diligent use of the means of grace. I felt that there was nothing I so much desired in this world, nothing I so much needed. But so far from in any measure attaining it, the more I pursued and strove after it, the more it eluded my grasp; till hope itself almost died out, and I began to think that, perhaps to make heaven the sweeter, God would not give it down here. I do not think I was striving to attain it in my own strength. I knew I was powerless. I told the Lord so, and asked Him to give me help and strength; and sometimes I almost believed He would keep and uphold me. But on looking back in the evening, alas! there was but sin and failure to confess and mourn before God.

"I would not give you the impression that this was the daily experience of all those long, weary months. It was a too frequent state of soul; that toward which I was tending, and which almost ended in despair. And yet never did Christ seem more precious—a Saviour who *could* and *would* save such a sinner! . . . And sometimes there were seasons not only of peace but of joy in the Lord. But they were transitory, and at best there was a sad lack of power. Oh, how good the Lord was in bringing this conflict to an end!

"All the time I felt assured that there was in Christ all I needed, but the practical question was how to get it *out*. He was rich, truly, but I was poor; He strong, but I weak. I knew full well that there was in the root, the stem, abundant fatness; but how to get it into my puny little branch was the question. As gradually the light was dawning on me, I saw that faith was the only pre-requisite, was the hand to lay hold on His fulness and make it my own. *But I had not this faith*. I strove for it, but it would not come; tried to exercise it, but in vain. Seeing more and more the wondrous supply of grace laid up in Jesus, the fulness of our precious

Saviour—my helplessness and guilt seemed to increase. Sins committed appeared but as trifles compared with the sin of unbelief which was their cause, which could not or would not take God at His word, but rather made Him a liar! Unbelief was, I felt, *the* damning sin of the world—yet I indulged in it. I prayed for faith, but it came not. What was I to do?

"When my agony of soul was at its height, a sentence in a letter from dear McCarthy was used to remove the scales from my eyes, and *the Spirit of God revealed the truth of our oneness with Jesus as I had never known it before*. * McCarthy, who had been much exercised by the same sense of failure, but saw the light before I did, wrote (I quote from memory): 'But how to get faith strengthened? Not by striving after faith, but by resting on the Faithful One.'

"As I read I saw it all! 'If we believe *not*, He *abideth faithful*.' I looked to Jesus and saw (and when I saw, oh, how joy flowed!) that He had said, '*I will never leave you*.' 'Ah, *there is rest!*' I thought. 'I have striven in vain to rest in Him. I'll strive no more. For has *He* not promised to abide with me—never to leave me, never to fail me?' And, dearie, *He never will!*

"But this was not all *He showed me*, nor one half. As I thought of the Vine and the branches, *what light the blessed Spirit poured direct into my soul!* * How great seemed my mistake in having wished to get the sap, the fulness *out* of Him. I saw not only that Jesus would never leave me, but that I was a member of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. The vine now I see, is not the root merely, but all—root, stem, branches, twigs, leaves, flowers, fruit: and Jesus is not only that. He is soil and sunshine, air and showers, and ten thousand times more than we have ever dreamed, wished for, or needed. Oh, the joy of seeing this truth! *I do pray that the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened*, * that you may know and enjoy the riches freely given us in Christ."

T. A-S.

(to be continued)

* Italics ours.

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GOD'S HEAVENLY KINGDOM

I. A REVEALER OF SECRETS

Reading : Daniel ii. 28, 47 ; Matt. xi. 25 - 27 ; Gal. i. 15, 16 ; Col. i. 27.

DANIEL'S prophecies, in their stress on God's heavenly kingdom, give us many titles of the Lord which are full of helpful significance. This is a very important one, A Revealer of Secrets. We need to know Him as such.

It was Daniel who first applied this description to the Lord, but Nebuchadnezzar eagerly took it up when he had powerful proof of its reality. When Daniel's story is told and when the prophecies reach their grand climax, something of the glory of this title is made known to us, and we come more and more to realise that supremely God has one great Secret which He wishes to reveal to us. This brings us right over into the New Testament. Here we are specifically told that God wills to manifest to us His mystery. We may use Daniel's word, for actually it conveys the idea better, and say that God wants to make known to us what is His great Secret.

God has a secret, and it is His purpose, His good pleasure to make that secret known. The apostle Paul, the great expounder of this matter of God's mystery, leaves us in no doubt as to the nature of this secret. His prayer for the Colossians was that they might have the riches of the full understanding, to "know the mystery of God, even Christ". This is God's secret, His great, inclusive heart secret, which He wishes to share with us ; His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Most people will admit that God is a holder of secrets, but here is a blessed promise that He will share them with us. His great longing desire is to uncover to us His own heart's secret. He is the Revealer of Secrets, if we can only know Him as such.

MAN'S NATURAL IGNORANCE

The New Testament has much to say about the inability of the natural man to discover those hidden treasures of wisdom and knowledge which are in Christ unless and until the Spirit of God makes them known to him. Here in Daniel's story we have a vivid illustration of that truth.

The astrologers and the magicians and the Chaldeans represented the cream of the intelligence of their day. These were no merely ignorant charlatans, pretending powers which they did not possess,

but the most gifted men in a great historic world empire. In the course of this book all these master-minds were challenged with the task of interpreting God's mind, and in each case they had to confess that it was beyond them. "There is not a man upon earth that can show the king's matter", they affirmed, "for it is a rare thing that the king requireth" (ii. 10, 11). "All the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation", Nebuchadnezzar had to confess (iv. 18). It was the same in the case of the fateful writing on the wall when Belshazzar was king: "Then came all the king's wise men: but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation" (v. 8).

In this threefold way, the Old Testament illustrates what Paul asserts, that is that the Divine wisdom, hidden in a mystery, is that which "none of the rulers of this world knoweth" (I Cor. ii. 8). Spiritual truth is learnt not by education, but by Divine illumination. If all the great ones of the earth had to confess that they could not understand, what hope was there for the ordinary simple person like ourselves? Yet in our own different ways, we all try to be experts in spiritual things. Or perhaps we envy others who have so much more ability or education than ourselves, as though this lack of ours disqualifies us from entering into intimate communion with the Lord. No, it is not man's ignorance but his pride which excludes spiritual knowledge, for God delights to unfold His riches to us, He is indeed the Revealer of Secrets.

Daniel had, of course, been in the same schools as these men, and learned the same lessons as they. It is suggested that he was cleverer than them all. Yet it was not this education which helped in the hour of need. It may have helped in a negative way, for true wisdom tends to make a man humble by reason of the realisation of his own limitations. Moses, like Daniel, also had a great share of this world's culture, and no doubt in the providence of God this served some useful purpose. But in spiritual things the first lesson in wisdom is the conviction that we can know nothing unless the Lord has mercy on our natural ignorance and gives us a vital knowledge of His own purposes and power.

THE HELPLESSNESS OF GOD'S SERVANT

We have seen that Daniel's education was of no

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use to him when he needed to know God's secret. Although a believer in God and a true servant of His, Daniel was just as much nonplussed as the rest. He still had nothing in himself, no personal ability to perceive Divine truths.

Let us, as children of God remember that the mere fact of our conversion does not ensure that automatically we know all about the Christian life and the things of God. Daniel was forced to confess that he was as dependent as anyone else on the willingness of God to give him light. He was no expert, no repository of spiritual revelation, but a man utterly cast on God who alone could make known the truth to him. When the need arose, he called his friends together to face the desperate need which was theirs. They had a conference; but it was a prayer conference. What they needed to do was to desire mercies of the God of Heaven concerning this secret. And it was then—after they had prayed—that the needed light came. Prayer in itself was a confession of their lack of knowledge, a recognition of their own emptiness. The delay which Daniel obtained from the king was not time to discuss or time to study—it was time for prayer, time to humble themselves before God and to wait on Him. This was always true of Daniel. It was while he was praying and confessing that heavenly light came. "Yea whiles I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel . . . instructed me and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to make thee skilful of understanding . . ." (ix. 22). At the very end of his prophecies he had to confess, "I heard, but I understood not" (xii. 8).

Daniel belonged to God, and in that was different from those around him, but even so he did not have the knowledge of Divine secrets in himself, any more than they had. What he did have, however, was a capacity for knowing them, and in that he differed from the rest. Those of us who belong to the Lord Jesus have that capacity; we do not know, but God can show us, and He desires to do so. How necessary, then, that we should humble ourselves before Him and wait on Him!

We get somehow nearer to our own days when we pass from dreams to the Book. "I Daniel understood by the books . . ." (ix. 2). All Divine revelation comes to us through the Word of God, and without that Word or apart from it we can never begin to enter into God's great secret. Yet even with the Word of God in his hand, Daniel was still humbling himself and seeking help by prayer. Indeed perhaps that is the time when most we need to pray. Even as Paul wrote some of the great truths of God's secret, he turned from his desk to his

knees, to pray for spiritual insight and illumination for those who would read. Our light comes not from a Book, though it comes through that Book; we are to have direct, personal dealings with the One who is the Revealer of Secrets.

GOD'S GOOD PLEASURE

It is not just that the Lord condescends to reveal but that He longs to do so and finds great pleasure when He can do it. With Him it is no grudging concession, but a heart-yearning. God wills to do it and He wants to do it, it is as though He had been waiting through the centuries to have the extreme pleasure of uncovering His love and grace in Christ.

Paul tells us that God separated him even from his birth. How many years must have elapsed between that birth and the day when he received the inward revelation of Christ of which he speaks (Gal. i. 16)! Why did he have to wait so long? Why was the light veiled from him? Not because of any unwillingness of God. It was not from a capricious motive that the Lord had to keep saying, Not yet! We know that on the contrary, God yearned over him, longing for the day when this proud but darkened heart might be given a revelation of His Son. It was as though He were saying, If only this man would let me, I would love to flood his spirit with heavenly light.

The Lord's desires are the same towards all of us. It may be that He longs to show us more of His Son but finds us lacking in that humble admission of our own helplessness in the matter which makes it possible for Him to do so. We thank God for His infinite mercy in revealing Christ to our bewildered and darkened hearts. We do well to thank Him for a glimpse of the Saviour, and for even a little unfolding of the greatness of His purpose in Christ. Yet we must never be satisfied with our present and limited knowledge, for the Father still wants to show us more of the greatness of His Son. This is His desire, and when it is our desire also, then we are in a position to be led into an ever-deepening spiritual and practical understanding of the meaning of Christ. Perhaps God yearns over us too, longing to give us new revelation, but having to wait until the time when we are aware of our emptiness and humble enough to seek new mercies from Him in this matter.

REVELATION IMPORTANT TO GOD

God is thinking of our need; but also He has purposes of His own which demand the opportunity

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of revealing His Son to us and in us. If the heavenly kingdom is to express its power here on earth, and if the Divine secret is to operate for the fulfilment of His purposes concerning mankind, then there is need for Him to have a link with men here on the earth. His purposes will be realised when He has men and women who have been given light from Heaven by a miracle.

It was not only that Daniel needed the Lord, but also that the Lord had need of Daniel. He needed him for a testimony in the world, not just to tell men God's Word but to be a true living expression here on earth of that eternal heavenly kingdom. Human history in the final issue depended not on the reign of Nebuchadnezzar or Belshazzar or Darius or Cyrus, but on the fact that "the heavens do rule" (iv. 26). God needed mouths to proclaim this and lives to prove it. He found what He needed in Daniel, and Daniel's fitness for this great vocation was based on the fact that he knew God as the Revealer of Secrets.

The illumination he had was not his own. Even the unbelievers knew this. "Thou art able ; for the spirit of the holy gods is in thee", declared Nebuchadnezzar, and his dissolute grandson, Belshazzar confessed, "I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee . . ." This, surely, is the heart of any true testimony in the world, that however muddled and ignorant men's minds may be, they recognize an authority and wisdom which is not of man. It is by the Spirit, and only by the Spirit, that we can come to know more of Christ.

The Lord not only needs witnesses, He also needs those who can co-operate with Him for the bringing in of His heavenly kingdom. The symbol of the stone cut out without hands emphasizes the essential heavenliness of this kingdom, as it seems, as it were, to crash like a thunderbolt from above. In later revelations given to Daniel the statement is made that "the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom" (vii. 22). These visions were not given to Daniel just to interest him, nor were they preserved till our day for mere academic purposes, but that God might have representatives of His kingdom standing with Him and serving Him, so that the great day of transformation to the universal rule of His Son might be brought in.

DANIEL'S URGENT NEED

It is most significant to observe the conditions in which Daniel first proved God's power to reveal secrets. He and his friends were in dire peril ; for them light and understanding were a matter of life and death. Though nothing is said in this

respect on the subsequent occasion, we can well believe that the capricious king would not have spared him if he had failed to give the necessary interpretation. When the three men got down to prayer, and when Daniel waited on the Lord for light, they were not indulging in intellectual study, but in a grim battle for life. It is out of such circumstances of deep need that men come to enter into the secrets of God.

This earnestness was not less evident in the later visions which the prophet had. In these cases his own life was not in any peril, and yet he had become so identified with his suffering nation that he himself agonized before God: ". . . behold our desolations . . ." "O Lord, hear ; O Lord, forgive ; O Lord hearken and do . . ." (ix. 18, 19). This is the kind of heart-exercise which makes it possible for God to shine from Heaven. After such heart-ache and such prayer, we are not surprised to find the heavenly messenger announcing "O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding" (ix. 22).

So it is that the Father reveals His Son to us. He takes hold of us and puts us into trials and problems for which there is no other answer than a new knowledge of Christ. He allows us to become involved in difficulties so great and so tragic that we have no solution of our own and can find none from anyone else. Then we are ready for new dealings with the Revealer of Secrets. This is God's way, the only way, the way of practical experience, and this will explain as nothing else can, why the Lord allows things to happen to us which are so hard to accept. It seems at times that our circumstances are just the opposite of what would be expected to give us new spiritual knowledge. Instead of quiet and detachment, we have distraction and continual demands. Instead of being able to ponder ideas we are brought face to face with realities. So it is that the Lord plans to teach us a true and inward knowledge of Christlikeness.

We know the difference between one who comes to give us information, however correct, and one who communicates some spiritual value to us. The difference is between mental understanding and spiritual illumination. The latter almost always has to be bought in the costly trials and difficulties of life. All through life there have to be new experiences of perplexity, of weakness and emptying. They seem to be all wrong, but they are quite right. God's purpose in them all is to drive us back to Himself for fresh unveilings and experiences of Christ. Not only to the sinner, but also to the saint, He is the Revealer of Secrets. H. F.

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HORIZONED BY RESURRECTION

(Continued)

HAVING instanced the changed position which the resurrection of the Lord Jesus effected in the cases of Mary Magdalene and the two disciples on the Emmaus Road, we proceed to consider the case of Thomas.

If among the group of associates of Jesus there was one to whom the resurrection was a greater problem, challenge, and demand for a new ground, that one was Thomas. As in each case being considered we are not embarking upon a biography, but only concentrating upon this difference that resurrection demands and makes; so, whatever we say of Thomas is with this object in view. We ask that this shall be kept in view, because it would be so easy to be taken up and occupied with the natural side. Whether it be Thomas, or any other, we only give a description in order to reach the general truth that, whatever the human category, a conquest is necessary. Not only a conquest, but a change in the person and of the ground upon which the person lives.

Thomas belongs to a category of human constitution which is easily recognizable. He is always near at hand. We will give a general delineation, and we are sure that he will be recognized.

This is the type which is marked by what is called (perhaps mis-named) commonsense—not so 'common' as to be superfluous. These are the people who are never gushing, never enthusiastic, and never flattering. They are slow to pay compliments, and would give the impression of being ungrateful for any kindness, and they seem to take such for granted or as a matter of course. They are heavy-going; more of the steam-roller or bulldozer than of the racing-car type.

They are deliberate, exact, and particular, and meticulous to a fault. They will not tolerate carelessness. If a *good* job is to be done, these are the people to do it, even if they take long over it. Public opinion and adverse criticism do not trouble them a great deal. Decision, fixity of mind, and stubbornness make them difficult to move. Frugality, economy, carefulness hold all their transactions in stern control. They are masters of detail, exact, pernickety, and free from anything approaching the slipshod. Perfection is their standard. They are conscientious to the point of burdensomeness. Caution clogs their wheels and makes for slow

going. They do not know what it means to give way, and once they take a decision or a judgment they are unrelenting.

Much is missed by them, even opportunities for larger and greater valuable usefulness because they cannot adjust. Their ships can be locked to harbour because they miss the tide.

Too often people of this category are immovably convinced that a thing *must* be right because *they* themselves believe it to be so. It is next to impossible to them to believe that they may possibly be wrong. They believe so strongly in themselves that it is hard for them to believe others.

Habit, routine, and rut are their prison chains. Self-concentration is their curse. They suffer from an exaggeration of individualism, therefore they separate themselves and tend to be independent. Narrow outlook and short views spoil the real values which they have in other directions. They frown much and sigh heavily, and may often carry about with them an impression of something akin to despair.

From what we can put together of the references to Thomas in the Gospels, it is not difficult to see how he fits into this category.

But having said all that, and we admit that it is not a very *happy* portrait, for Thomas—while having many attractive features—is not by nature a happy person, we must hasten to say some redeeming things about him. Firstly: Thomas *was* one of the 'Twelve'. Thomas was to be representative in part of the Church. The Lord saw, and was in need of the values of this type when they are redeemed from their complications and handicaps; from the limitations, frustrations, and self-assurance. Yes, *release* is the particular and crying need here.

So, in a peculiar way, resurrection was—and is—a clash and a crisis with Thomas and his class. Unless released he will miss much himself and rob the Church of much. This nearly happened with him because of his "Unless . . . I will not". The crisis is that of enlargement, and resurrection means that supremely.

The Lord called Thomas, and he calls us with full knowledge of our particular and peculiar makeup.

The Lord has a particular place and sphere, and function for each type.

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The Lord calls—and only calls—with the knowledge of what *He* can do with the material in His hand, if He is allowed to do it. There is a vital place for an emancipated Thomas. Do not let us dismiss him with the cheap epithet—‘Doubting Thomas’. The Lord did not do that.

Some things are necessary on our part, and the thing to be mentioned first is particularly applicable to Thomas.

We must not take ourselves, *as we are*, so seriously as to measure and fix everything and everybody by ourselves. We must seek ever and always the grace of adjustableness.

We must remember that the last word to Thomas *as the natural Thomas*, was one of *comparative* rather than *absolute* blessedness, and who wants

that? (John xx. 29). There are levels and degrees of blessedness according to how much we are saved from *ourselves*, however devout! There is a higher level than that of having brought things to our own criterion of *literal*, technical, physical, evidence and proof. The spiritual is higher than the rational, i.e., human reason.

The resurrection has to be a soul-splitting, human-nature-rending *experience*; a crisis, not only of will, but of disposition. Every devout Christian will say with Thomas, “My Lord, and my God”; but with Thomas it was a capitulation, an evacuation of himself, a broken-hearted surrender of his own predisposition.

He was still Thomas, but different, so different!

T. A-S.

(to be continued)

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

ROPES OR HARPS

HAVE you ever heard of the Sirens? No, not the wailing warnings on ships or fire-stations, but the two sisters who sang with marvellous sweetness to lure sailors on to the rocks.

They appear in many stories which the Greeks loved to tell. Homer’s *Odyssey* (Book 12) tells the story of how Ulysses (Odysseus) sailed past the rocky island where they were supposed to live. He had been warned by Circe of the danger which their boat would meet as they sailed past this island. The story was that their singing was so wonderfully attractive that anyone who listened to it was bound to be wrecked, and to leave his bones on the sea shore which was already piled up with the skeletons of those who had already met with disaster through listening to the Sirens.

Circe not only warned Ulysses of the danger (many people can do that!) but also told him how to be safe in the moment of peril. This is what he did. He filled the ears of all his crew with wax, so that they were deaf to every sound. Then he got them to tie him firmly to the mast, having first commanded them that on no account were they to let him go free. It was in this way that they rowed past “the marvellous sirens and their flowery meadow”.

Sure enough, the Sirens sang most sweetly, calling Ulysses by name to entice him to join them. He could not resist their call; his heart ached to hear more of their singing; so he made signs to his friends to release him. They, however, loyal to his

orders, only tightened the ropes and even added new ones. The Sirens sang their sweetest, but the wax and the ropes defeated their evil attraction, and the crew rowed on to safety.

The Greeks had also another story about the Sirens. This tells how the Argonauts were supposed to have sailed past the same perilous island. Their leader, Orpheus, was the great musician whose name is well known to us all. He used another method to conquer the temptation. As the ship drew within earshot of the seductive sisters “he raised his voice to the harp in loud and long praises of the immortal gods, and thus overcame the charm of the Sirens with another and better charm”. They also passed safely on, for Orpheus sang so beautifully that no one had ears for the Sirens.

As we sail on through life’s journey, there are many evil calls, some of them honey-sweet, which try to lure us out of the right way on to the rocks of sin and death. How shall we overcome these temptations? It seems to me that there are two ways. There is the way of Ulysses, the way of wax and ropes. This means that we hold ourselves down, or get others to hold us, so that while we want to yield to the temptation we have some restraint which keeps us back. This is better than nothing, but it either depends on our strength or on the help of others, and we do not always have that help. When we are quite small our parents can guard us, but as we get older we have to make

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our own decisions, and we do not always have the strength to overcome, nor do we always have such loyal and faithful friends as Ulysses had.

There is a better way. It is described in Philipians 3. 1. "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same thing to you, to me is not troublesome, but for you it is safe". "For you it is life"! What? Why, this determination to keep rejoicing in the Lord. This is the way in which Orpheus was said to overcome, and it is certainly the

Christian way. If we "raise our voices . . . in loud and long praises" to the One Immortal God, our Saviour Jesus Christ, then the world will have no power.

We want to be safe from failure and sin. We can choose ropes or harps. Harps are the best safeguards. Satan's call to destruction can be drowned by the sweetness of our praises. If we make it our business to think often of the greatness and goodness of our Saviour, and to rejoice in Him, we shall avoid shipwreck and sail on safely. H. F.

THE REVELATION OF SONS

For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God" (Romans iii. 19).

THE Apostle has been describing believers as sons' and 'heirs'. He drops from these transcendent heights to contrast their present apparent condition with their true character and future glory. The sad realities of suffering darken his lofty hopes, even although these sad realities are his faith tokens of joint-heirship with Jesus, and pledges that if our inheritance is here manifested by suffering with Him, that very fact is a prophecy of common glory hereafter. He describes that future as the realising of a glory, to which the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared; and then, in our text, he varies the application of that thought of revealing and thinks of the subjects of it as being the 'sons of God'. They will be revealed when the glory which they have as joint-heirs with Christ is revealed in them. They walk, as it were, compassed in mist and cloud, but the splendours which will fall on them will scatter the envious darkness, and 'when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we with Him appear with Him in glory.'

We may consider:—

I. THE PRESENT VEIL OVER THE SONS OF GOD

There is always a difference between appearance and reality. The sons of God have a life-germ hidden in their souls which in its very nature is destined to fill their whole being, and to permeate with its triumphant energy every corner of their nature. But it is often overborne by its opposite. The seed sown is to grow in spite of bad weather and a poor soil and many weeds, and although it is destined to overcome all these, it may to-day

only be able to show on the surface a little patch of struggling growth. When we think of the cost at which the life of Christ was imparted to men, and of the Divine source from which it comes, and of the sedulous and protracted discipline through which it is being trained, we cannot but conclude that nothing short of its universal dominion over all the faculties of its imperfect possessors can be the goal of its working.

The sons of God, even more than other men, have contending principles fighting within them. It was the same Apostle who denied with oaths that he 'knew the man', and in a passion of clinging love and penitence fell at His feet.

The sons of God are veiled because the world's estimate of them is untrue. They are *unknown* and yet *wellknown*. They live for the most part veiled in obscurity.

II. THE UNVEILING OF THE SONS OF GOD

That unveiling is in the text represented as coming along with the glory that shall be revealed to usward, and as being contemporaneous with the deliverance of creation itself from the bondage of corruption, and its passing into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. It coincides with the vanishing of the pain in which the whole creation now groans and travails, and with the adoption—that is, the redemption of our body. All this points to the time when Jesus Christ will be revealed, and His servants are revealed with Him in glory. That revelation brings with it of necessity the manifestation of the sons of God for what they are—the making visible in the life what God sees them to be. That revelation of the sons of God is the result of the entire dominion and transforming supremacy of the Spirit of God in them. The limitations and imperfections of our present bodily life

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will all drop away in putting on 'the body of glory' which shall be ours.

That revelation will be more surprising to no one than to those who are its subjects, when they see themselves mirrored in that glass, and so unlike what they are here. Their first impulse will be to wonder at the form they see, and to ask, almost with incredulity, 'Lord, is it I?'

Nor will the wonder be less when they recognize many whom they knew not. The surprises when the family of God is gathered together will be great. That revelation will be made to the whole universe; we know not how, but we know it shall be; and, as the text tells us, that revelation of the sons of God is the hope for which 'the earnest expectation of the creation waits.'

A. McL. (SELECTED)

LEADERSHIP

CHAPTER TWO

HAVING introduced this matter of leadership in a more-or-less general way, we now proceed to look into it more closely in order to learn from Bible examples the principles which are basic to it and the features which delineate it.

Before coming to our first great example let us emphasize the two common factors in spiritual leadership.

One is the fact of the sovereign act of God. In His choice of men for specific responsibility God acts in the absolute right and independence of His own sovereignty. No one is allowed to question His act, His judgment, His reason. Sovereignty is unpredictable. God is answerable to no one, neither is He responsible to anyone. His thoughts and His ways are unfathomable, and in His wisdom He waits long past His acts for vindication. But it is always vindicated in the final issue.

The second factor is that of God linking Himself with a vessel—a human vessel, and linking that vessel with Himself for a special purpose. This is the meaning of anointing in both Testaments. Anointing in which God so commits Himself to the vessel is always related to purpose, and man cannot touch that vessel or dispute its work without having—sooner or later, by sudden intervention or the slowly-grinding mills of God—to reckon with God. It is here that we are forbidden to judge God's instrument on the ground of their humanity apart from God. We may think that they provide ground for adverse judgment, but if God is using them and is with them it will only bring us into a controversy on the part of God with us if we touch His anointed, in word or deed. The Bible has many instances of this. Provided the vessel remains in meekness, God will take full responsibility for its defects, and for its vindication.

Having said that, we can now proceed to the first example of leadership in the Bible. While *the*

principle of leadership was at work from the beginning, leadership only had its full expression when there was a people needing and prepared for it. This full expression of the principle first came out in Moses.

MOSES — THE FIRST OF THE GREAT BIBLE LEADERS

1. What we have said regarding the sovereignty of God is unmistakable in the case of Moses. From his birth and preservation at birth right through his history all the evidences of his being "a chosen vessel" are clear. He was where he was because God did it. Even when, out of sympathy and wrath, he essayed to assume the position of deliverer, that was negated, because this thing had got to be so utterly of God.

The endurance of Moses is a matter that is remarked upon in Scripture, but that endurance—as ours will be—was greatly supported by his later knowledge that he was where he was because God had done it, and it was not of his own choosing. How important it is that Christians, and especially Christian leaders should be in a position to say emphatically that they know how true Christ was when He said, "Ye did not choose me, but I chose you". This foundation of 'an act of God' is the only one to support the tremendous weight of responsibility and demand that leadership has to experience.

2. The second thing that comes out so clearly as making for leadership is

THE FIRSTHAND KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE OF THAT OUT FROM WHICH WE ARE TO LEAD OTHERS

Moses had forty of the years in Egypt when the Pharaoh-complex of Joseph's time had so utterly

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changed from favour to hostility. He was born into that hostility and hatred and would have known from his mother and sister of his own Providential escape. He knew the palace and its tensions. He lived in the atmosphere of mingled fear and animosity. He daily saw the conditions of his own people. As with Joseph, "the iron entered into his soul". No doubt that background contributed greatly to his later reluctance to go back, and his effort to find a way out of so doing.

It is not God's way to send inexperienced people into leadership-responsibility. Such people are really handicapped and in serious weakness. A part of the training of any leader should be a *firsthand* knowledge of the world and its inimical forces, and a life with God in the midst thereof.

Many a servant of God has been profoundly thankful in after years that—in the sovereignty and foreknowledge of God—he had periods in conditions against which God reacted through him. This may apply to various aspects and phases of life. God places His servants in situations which are not His ultimate will for them, and the time will come when they react against what at one time *seemed* to be wholly or almost wholly of God. It is strange that it is possible at one time to believe a position to be *wholly* of God, and later to discover that it was only the provisional will of God to qualify for something quite other. Such servants of God take with them through life a very real *inside* knowledge which makes it possible for them to say, "We speak that which we do know". We could hardly exaggerate the importance and value of this factor in leadership.

3. The third factor in this leadership is a fundamental lesson that

THE WORK OF GOD IS ESSENTIALLY SPIRITUAL

Moses was "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. He no doubt had natural endowments. He certainly had rich acquired qualifications. He was evidently a man of considerable physical strength. His natural disposition was to be thorough in anything that he undertook, as see him slaying the Egyptian and separating the quarrelling Hebrews. He was not lacking in zeal nor weak in initiative. But with all this God did not take him up on those grounds. "Not by might, nor by power" are words which very aptly apply to Moses at the age of forty years.

"The weapons of our warfare are not carnal". The real and eternal aspect of God's work is spiritual, therefore only spiritual men with spiritual ex-

perience and resources can do it effectively. God's true leaders are spiritual men and men of the Spirit.

All our natural ability, our training, our acquired qualifications; our strength, zeal, and learning will prove of little avail when we come up against the ultimate forces of the universe, which are spiritual. This Moses well knew when he came actually to his life-work.

Leadership is often born of the deep discipline of failure and self-discovery. The second forty years of his life served such a purpose and were no doubt deeply tinged with the bitterness of self-disillusionment. He was in a much safer place when he shrank from the responsibility than when he self-confidently tackled it in his own strength.

4. A further qualification for leadership as seen in the case of Moses is

FAITHFULNESS, PROMPTNESS, AND HUMILITY IN ORDINARY AND UNSPECTACULAR AFFAIRS

Tending a few sheep at the back side of the desert by an erstwhile royal prince of Egypt for a considerable number of years could be a fair test of patience and lack of bitterness. The opportunity to help some defenceless women to get their flocks watered was neither beneath his dignity nor an annoying interruption in preoccupation with 'higher and more important matters'. He was not so disaffected by his disappointment as to be contemptuous of a humble piece of work. High-mindedness is a disqualification for leadership. The Lord watches the out-of-sight life and determines His approval there. A true leader is not one who has to be shown and asked to do menial things, but one who sees a need and self-forgetfully lends a hand. It is quite evident that God knew where Moses was, and that he was not a castaway servant. Moses had been inwardly disciplined in the school of inaction, a very hard school for his active and energetic type. The self-emptying had been a painful process, but it had effected God's intention and put him on that essential ground of spiritual leadership which is "no confidence in the flesh"; "all things are of [out from] God".

But the immediate point is that upon which the Lord's eye was looking during the time of waiting. That is, a *spirit* of service. It is so easy to be active and energetic when there is some big, interesting, or worthwhile job on hand, especially if it is in the public eye or alongside of others. But the real test is when things are quite otherwise and we are right down to bedrock principle; the principle

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of conscientiousness without the influence of relatedness in responsibility and another's eye upon us. Service is a spirit, not an outward obligation. There is very little of the spirit of service left in the world now, but with God it has always been something of which He has taken particular account. This is *His* law of trust and approval—"He that is faithful in that which is least". Say what we may about Moses himself, and of Divine Sovereignty in his life, but let it be understood that Divine Sovereignty does not bypass simple 'everyday' behaviour in what may seem to be very insignificant matters. A whole life's vocation may turn upon a seemingly small issue. *It is our spirit that God looks at. The few sheep at the back of the desert; a few helpless women in difficulty had a place in God's esteem which led to a true exaltation.*

5. THE LESSON OF THE BUSH

The episode of the bush was *the* crisis and turning-point in the life of Moses. We could say that the past forty years found their meaning and issue here, and the following forty their strength. There is an incomparable meaning in this, and the significance was immense, for here we are in the presence of the Triune God in combined operation unto the emancipation of an elect people.

God, the Father, was in the bush. God, the Son, was the indestructible humanity—the Son of Man.

God, the Holy Spirit, was the fire. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself" (II Cor. v. 19). "Jesus, filled with the Holy Spirit . . ." (Luke iv. 1). "Ye shall receive power, the Holy Spirit coming upon you" (Acts i. 8).

The full and glorious meaning of the Incarnation of God's Son unto redemption is symbolized in the non-burning bush. (The Bible does not speak of the bush as burning in the sense of being consumed.) When Moses, many years after, pronounced the blessings upon the tribes, the highly esteemed Joseph was to know "the good will of him that dwelt in the bush" (Deut. xxxiii. 16). Moses came to understand that "good will" in all its redeeming love. What a basis and background for leadership!

Moses may not have understood all the New Testament meaning, but he came into the power.

What Moses was meant to understand, for his great responsibility, was that humanity in itself may be frail, weak, and as vulnerable as a bush of the desert, but if God links Himself with it in the power of the Holy Spirit, it can endure and live and triumph when naturally it should succumb.

In the first place the bush represented Christ.

In the second place it represented the Church.

In the third place it represented every God-chosen instrument of purpose.

Not merely survival, but supernatural triumph—in a scorching desert—is true of each.

T. A-S.

THE DIFFERENCE IT MAKES WHEN THE WIND IS IN OUR SAILS

NOTE BY THE EDITOR.

Many years ago the editor of A Witness and a Testimony was one of several hundreds of ministers to whom the following sermon was preached at an annual meeting. It was so much appreciated that, when the preacher apologized for being so long, there were loud cries of "Go on"!

It is thought that this message will be helpful to many of God's servants who receive this paper. Permission has been given to print it here.

"And he reasoned in the synagogue and sought to persuade . . . But when Silas and Timotheus came down from Macedonia Paul was constrained by the Word and testified to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ" (Acts xviii. 4, 5).

I AM quite sure that it is not merely fanciful to observe a difference between the state of mind attributed to S. Paul in the earlier verse and the state of mind attributed to him in the verse which immediately follows. In the one you must detect the note of strain and difficulty; in the other there is the sense of ease and fulness. In the earlier verse we read that this servant of the Lord reasoned and tried to persuade, the very words giving us the impression of toil. In the later verse we read that this same servant of the Lord became absorbed in the Word, and testified or bore witness to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ, the very words giving us a happy impression of victory. In the one case you have the picture of a man "distressed in rowing"; in the other you have the picture of a man with a wind in his sails. In the one case you have a

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good man doing the best he can in the circumstances, his mood at the moment being what it is. In the other you have a good man become blessedly aware of some great Ally and resource. In the one case, we read, he "reasons and tries to persuade": in the other he "testifies". In the one case he is talking about a mystery; in the other he is speaking out of some fresh contact with it, like one in love.

Perhaps if we were more persistently faithful to God, and reminded ourselves more regularly of the principles of our religion, we should all be less liable than we are to these sudden alternations of mood. Doubtless not one of us ought to be so much at the disposal of circumstances as we are. But, accepting ourselves as we must, we confess that we are susceptible to these sudden alternations of mood and feeling when our spirits in one moment can fall, as it were, through illimitable space, or from the loneliest depths may rise. Often it is a very small thing that has this so masterful effect upon our minds, bringing darkness, which seems at the moment the heart of the world, or light, which seems at the moment to be the blessed truth of things. There are even times when we catch ourselves in moods of sorrow and despondency, when if we were asked or if we asked ourselves, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?", we should have difficulty in giving any reason at all.

"In the world of the soul", says Faber, "there are often shadows when there are no clouds". Still, if it is true that a small thing may plunge a sensitive soul into darkness, it is equally true, and it is only just to God to recall this, that a small thing may likewise let loose within the soul the most amazing mood of joy.

Here, then, we have two verses, one following the other immediately, and yet it is not too much to say, if our insight in these matters is at all authentic, that the man who is described in the earlier verse and the man who is described in the later verse are two men living in totally different universes. And the one thing I wish to make clear to myself is: what made this immense and most blessed difference?

Any man who knows his New Testament knows that at the time referred to in the text S. Paul was passing through probably the darkest days of his life. I confess that there are passages in the Corinthian Epistles which I cannot read without tears. There are moments when the Apostle is almost reduced to that position to which we must never be reduced, when we must cry for mercy to *men*. He tells us that during his stay in Corinth, and especi-

ally in the early days of his stay, he was ill. There are allusions in the uncanonical literature of the first century which corroborate, what we are prepared to believe, that S. Paul was never a robust man—which only heightens our wonder at the work he did. Whether it was an affection of the eyes, as some allege, or a tendency to epilepsy as some others who have a dogmatic interest in that hypothesis declare, S. Paul's own writings bear witness to any man who has insight that the Apostle must have been one with a rare and sensitive physical organization. In Corinth, then, for many reasons, things were at their worst for him. He preached, he says, "in bodily weakness and fear and much trembling". "Without were fightings, within were fears"; "the care of all the churches was upon him". And there, too, that mysterious malady swooped upon him, whether of the body or of the soul, who knows?—that messenger of Satan sent to buffet him. He had prayed God three times that He might remove it from him, and God had answered, No.

And then all this took place, at least so it seems to me, at a time when S. Paul himself was predisposed to take a sad view of things. It would be foolish to say S. Paul's mission to Athens, which immediately preceded, had failed; but a close reading of the Apostle's own narrative warrants us in saying that in his own view he had not succeeded. We learn further, to complete the picture of despondency, that somehow, certainly in the early stages, the Apostle had not found things go well with him even in Corinth. I think it was the most difficult of all his churches. We can hear of complaints made as to his preaching, as to his own personal appearance even, and as to the way in which he developed and enforced his ideas. And all these things coming together and coming upon him in a time of bodily infirmity, when he was disposed to think the worst of himself, drove his spirit down to the depths. Well, this is God's way, or one of His ways, of teaching us the Higher Knowledge of Himself. It is only a man whom God deals with in this utter way who later on can exclaim: "O the depths of the riches of Christ; the depth of them!"

In these circumstances Paul did his best. He reasoned and tried to persuade. There are times when this is the best we can do, and if that be so, we must do it. Only let us never for a moment rest satisfied with that way of doing Christ's work in the world. All the time we are arguing and trying to persuade, let us see that there is never absent from our soul a certain attitude of suppliance to-

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wards God, that He would have pity upon us as we struggle with these contending waters, and come to our rescue, making bare His own arm. It is all to the honour of the Apostle that, passing through the things which he was passing through, and with a gloom upon his soul which was inevitable, he nevertheless went on reasoning and trying to persuade. He did not resign. Not only was it a great thing, but it was the wisest thing also. What I mean by that is this. It is a temptation which besets us all when the wind for some reason or other falls away and our boat lies impotent upon the water, it is a temptation for us, sometimes even in the name of *piety*, to sit there waiting till a wind springs up again. But this is not a course which is an honour to God; for it is not honouring to other sides of our nature, other faculties with which our religion has likewise to deal. God does send us times of power. It may very well be that but for our own miserable weaknesses this power would be permanent, but as it is, even in the way of our obedience, times come when our soul is idle. At such times we need not be idle. There are oars. Many a time in the voyage of our spirits we lie becalmed longer than there is need, because had we in the day of impotence bestirred ourselves we should have found ourselves next moment in the way of another wind.

There is a principle there which, if I had had time, I should have liked to develop, in order to establish the point,—that it is as we are faithful to what we know, and are using such powers as we have in the obedience of God, that greater powers are given us. It is quite true that we may speed along so happily under a wind from heaven that it may seem to us that this is the only method by which God means to use us. And yet again and again I hold that there is a co-operation necessary on the part of a man—and this also is not without the aid of God's Spirit—which nevertheless may be a condition of the Spirit's more effective possession of us. To take an illustration from the processes of the human mind: we know how we may try to recall some name or word, how we may put pressure upon our own mind without success. We feel that no good is going to come of any further pressure, and so we give up the whole business, whereupon, after the tension of our thinking has been released, the word or the name which we were searching for comes wandering into the field of our mind. It would be foolish for you to say in the circumstances that the name would have occurred to you supposing you had not put that previous pressure upon your mind. You have no reason to

believe anything short of this, that the pressure gave to your whole intellect a purpose and direction, that it imposed an attitude of receptivity upon your brain which made you competent to lay hold upon the elusive thing. It is always possible to hold on a little longer.

My whole point is that it is to souls which are faithful to God and which do reverence to their own experience in the dark and difficult places that the Holy Spirit even in this world comes, and greets them now with the approval which is promised to the faithful at the end, "Thou hast been faithful, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord".

Paul reasoned and tried to persuade them. The words, I repeat, give us a sense of heaviness and difficulty and dryness of spirits, as of a man rowing against the stream or crossing a moor with the wind in his teeth. In the next verse we read that this same man, being constrained by the Word, bare witness that Jesus is the Christ, the very words giving us the sense of victory, of a certain fine carelessness as to consequence, a certain sure-footedness and confidence.

And once again we are going to ask what under God may have brought about the blessed change? We read that it was when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia that the wind of God sprang up in the soul of Paul. And why? Oh, there is no need to ask. Have you ever grasped the hand of a friend in the day of some utter desolation? Have you ever met a man who believed in you in some day when you have scarcely believed in yourself? If you can remember such a day, you do not need to be told that a man may be to his brother in the place of God.

Isaiah promised that a day was coming when a man should be as a "hiding-place from the wind and as a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place and as a shadow of a great rock in a weary land".

Silas and Timothy were all that to Paul. . . . In the case of a sensitive soul like his it would be enough to see these men who had been with him at other times—it would be enough simply to see them for his heart with a great rebound to recover its joy. But when they went away with Paul in private and gave him their news, then his cup was full to overflowing. And after the recent soreness I can quite understand how the Apostle could no longer contain himself. I can understand with what a shining face he preached next day: how he had no use for his old vocabulary, how the things that he had been saying, whilst they were all true doubtless, now had their place in an atmosphere

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om which he had escaped. For what was it that Silas and Timothy told Paul. If you consult the message in the first Epistle to the Thessalonians, here you have the story told by Paul himself, you will read: "When Timothy came even now unto us from you and brought us glad tidings of your faith and love, and that ye have remembrance of us, always longing to see us even as we long to see you, for this cause we were comforted over you in all our distress and affliction through your faith. For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord."

That was the news that Silas and Timothy brought to Paul. That was what completed the resurrection of his spirit. He rose with Christ from the dead in newness of life. Truly, "how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings"!

We have many a discussion in our day and many a controversy as to the proper function of the Church. What if this be the function of the Church—namely, there is no question about it, this is the function of the Church. The Church of Christ is a *society of friends*. The Church of Christ is that community which by all its words and ordinances and by its atmosphere mediates to the hard-pressed soul of man the comfort of an understanding God. And this comfort the true Church will always mediate, not simply by her assertion that such comfort dwells in God, but by manifesting, incarnating that comfort in the actual friendliness of her members.

I do not need to say much more as to how this contact with these old friends and this hearing of their good news would affect the whole bearing of the Apostle. *It would help him to believe in himself again*. It would take away his sense of loneliness—that he was one man fighting against the world. It would also deliver him from those misgivings which threaten a man in the day of defeat—misgivings as to his fitness for his high calling, or misgivings as to whether the power of God has its way with men as it once had. This happy contact with his two friends would have the blessed effect also of making the Apostle sure that, in spite of failures here and there, God had honoured and acknowledged his word.

Newman once said that few of us can do without a little success; and the truth of that saying lies just there. And a man is lost when he has lost heart. By some means a man must be saved from the idea that he and what he is doing are of no consequence—that he is simply accidental, irrelevant, having no organic relation to the lives of other people or to the great life of the world. Nothing can deliver the soul from such utter despondency

except by its perceiving, with the perfect lucidity of some recent humiliation, the pure goodness of what Christ has revealed to us concerning God—that God is One who cares for us, that all service ranks the same with Him, that with Him there is neither first nor last.

And that, in a final word on this matter, is what these two friends did for Paul. They brought him back with a kind of violence to the thought of God.

There is no need for me to explain in any pedantic way the difference between a man reasoning and trying to persuade and a man who is bearing witness to the truth. To witness is to speak out of the joy and certainty of experience. It is to be fresh, to be contemporary. It is to have our soul poised and on the strain, aware of some danger all the time, and all the time confident that the danger need never engulf us.

We might put it, then, that S. Paul's soul was delivered from its gloom and difficulty and dryness of spirits, and that the whole world lost its greyness and monotony when he began to think away from himself as he was at the moment to himself as he had been in some brighter hour, and to remember all the way by which the Lord had led him.

Most sorrows are forms of loneliness; and Silas and Timothy by their presence assured Paul that he was not alone so far as they were concerned, and by what they told him about his work they assured him that he was not alone so far as God was concerned. That is how these things happen. And what we need to-day, who have our hours and days of misgiving and despondency, is to lift up our eyes and behold the things which are there to quicken the pulse of every true man of God.

The New Testament closes with an illustration of the sublime scale of the principle with which we have been dealing. The New Testament, as you know, closes with a kind of declaration of war against the world, or rather with the acceptance of a declaration of war by the world against the Church. It seemed an unequal conflict. Not many wise, not many mighty, not many great, had been called. The proud power of Rome—that Rome concerning which a senator had said, "She does not go to battle, she goes to war"; she does not allow herself, that is to say, to be distracted from her purpose by any temporary defeat—the proud, invincible power of Rome had set herself against a feeble people. And yet Rome encountered in the Church of Christ something greater than herself. She encountered a community which after centuries of experience could say, "The Son of God goes

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forth to war". Blow after blow she rained upon that meek and apparently uncomplaining body; but the anvil broke the hammer. That, however, is to anticipate by two hundred years.

The New Testament, I had said, closes with the heavy sense of a great struggle about to enter upon a fiercer and more intimate stage. S. John, the aged, desires to deliver a message of comfort to the hard-buffed servants of Christ, desires to lift up their hearts from immediate things, from the apparent failure and discomfiture—and how? It is as though he had said. "Beloved, soon I must leave you, and leave you as sheep in a world of wolves. I see the little Church of Christ set in the depths of Satan. I see an infernal ocean of evil sending long tongues of its assaulting element as far as it dare toward the very centre of our faith; but, Beloved, never for one moment believe that what you see with the natural eye is all that is. For hearken!

"After these things I saw and behold, a door opened in Heaven." And then the holy man discloses what he sees . . .

There he saw the saints, those who had come out of the great tribulation, and their prayers filled all heaven with their incense—those who through all the ages had been faithful. He saw the Angels and Archangels and all the Host of Heaven, and their number was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands upon thousands. And they all gathered round the Throne, and on the Throne there was a Lamb as It had been slain! Ours, indeed, is not a conflict against flesh and blood; but there is more than flesh and blood upon our side.

That is the last word of the New Testament, the last message of the Spirit to the Church on earth. We are not alone. The things which are seen are temporal and the things which are not seen are Eternal.

SELECTED.

I WILL OVERTURN

(A Message as spoken)

"I will overturn, overturn, overturn . . . until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him" (Ezekiel xxi. 27).

YOU will see, if you look, that those words have an immediate and a much wider context. Their immediate context is the life-ministry of the prophet. His times were to see the beginning and the carrying forward, to some quite serious degree, of the fulfilment of these words. But there is also an expanded context, and the expanse of that context has not yet reached its final phase. But here in the Scriptures much of that expanded context is noted and mentioned. The overturning began very soon after the prophet was caused to make this proclamation of Jehovah's intention. The immediate context, then, was that of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem as the symbol and representation of the nation: the nation which was chosen of God for a purpose. God's special purpose: the nation which had been carefully, painstakingly and patiently constituted and disciplined unto that purpose, and then had so lamentably failed, so tragically missed the mark. Unto that nation the words were addressed: "I will overturn, overturn, overturn".

The reason? The lost distinctiveness in their life. They had gone out to the world in illicit and forbidden relationship of a spiritual character, and the world had been let into them in a defiling and

corrupting way, resulting in that end which is always and ever an abomination to God—mixture. In and amongst His people there was the lost distinctiveness of their life, the lost vitality in the means which God had provided for the realisation of His purpose. He had provided tabernacle and temple, priesthood and ordinances, sacrifices and feasts, and much more. He had made a great provision in this way, but all was intended to be a vital, an effective means to an end, not as an end in itself. That vitality had been lost in temple, priesthood, sacrifices, ordinances, and they had all become a formality, a mere daily routine; something being kept up, something just in itself: a great formalism, without life. Vitality in the means had gone and God's deposit was dead in their midst. They had lost the vision as to the purpose of their existence. They had lost both the consciousness and the knowledge of why they were the Lord's people. They were claiming to be a special people amongst the peoples of the earth. They were using His Name, but the purpose for which they were the Lord's people had been lost to their consciousness; their vision of the great object and end of God in choosing them from among all the peoples of the earth had been lost.

You know that that is the cry of the prophets. Their cry is against this mixture, this defilement. Their cry is against this mere formalism. Through

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Isaiah the Word of the Lord came: "*Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sin. Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways*" (Isaiah lviii. 1). They were carrying on, but without vision, without purity, without vitality.

All that led to this "*I will overturn, overturn, overturn*". As though the Lord was saying, 'I am not going to preserve mere form, mere shell, mere profession. To Me, it is all hypocrisy, unreality. I will overturn.' Why? Because these things, the things that really matter, the things that characterize a people under the true government and in the true energies of the Holy Spirit, are gone. Because of the lack of these things authority was lost in Israel, authority in the nations, an authoritative voice in their own midst. They were not registering in life, in word, and in testimony.

It is a tragic situation when the people of God lose their authority in the world, and they always do so when they mix in with the world, and when the world is mixed in with them.

Then there was lost unity. We see the crumbling of the nation, the breaking up and disintegration, until the only suitable picture is that of the valley of dry bones, very many and much scattered, unrelated, unarticulated, disintegrated.

Then again there was the loss of the position to which God had brought them. He had brought them by covenant into the land and set them there as His own place for them. God's place for the nation was the land, and they lost their position, their God-appointed position, and were cast out of it.

Finally, the prophecies lead to the lost glory, the lost glory in and over the people of God. The glory lifted up and moved right away. The Lord says about such a state "*I will overturn, overturn, overturn*". 'This cannot go on.'

A NEW TESTAMENT COUNTERPART

And, dear friends, may I have your forbearance if I remind you again that these prophecies are not exclusively concerning Israel in the Old Testament and the old dispensation. There is that in the New Testament which corresponds to this immediate context. This terrible chapter xxi of Eekiel's prophecies has been called 'The Song of the Sword'. If you read immediately associated with these words of verse 27 'The sword, the sword, the sword, the point of the sword, God's unsheathed sword', and by the sword He is going to "overturn, overturn,

overturn", may I remind you that we have two corresponding passages in this other realm of the Church in the New Testament. One is the Letter to the Hebrews: "*I will shake the heavens and the earth*" (verse 26). The other? It is in the coming of the Lord Jesus into the midst of the seven lamp-stands, and in that comprehensive and matchless description and presentation of Him there is this: "*He that hath the sharp two-edged sword*", and He begins with it at the churches (Revelation ii. 12). His is an overturning in churches. The sword is cleaving, dividing, finding out, searching and judging, and there is that which, having resulted in, so largely resulted in the loss of the specific purpose, falls to the sword of the Lord. These are hard words but suffer them for the moment. It is like that. The Lord is saying to the churches, representing the whole Church, the same things as He said to Israel here. 'I am not a bit interested in or concerned with your religious form. I am not a bit interested in or concerned with much religious or Christian activity. "I know thy works". I am not concerned with your profession. The thing for which you were raised up, elected and constituted is My eternal purpose concerning My Son, that in *all* things He might have the pre-eminence, occupy the first, the full, and final place; and anything that either falls short of that, or contradicts that, must come under the sword. I will overturn, overturn, overturn.' And judgment begins at the House of God.

Dear friends, if this is true and we are not mistaken, the Church in general is going to meet the sword, is going to be dealt with in this way, and there is going to be a whole lot of activities and works and professions and whatnot that is going to the sword, going to be overturned, overturned, overturned, in order to get to that end which God has appointed.

And what is true of the whole Church will be true of any local company of believers. If the Lord sees unreality, sees hypocrisy, mere formality, making His Divine things just an end in themselves, turned in on ourselves and not ministering to and forging toward the great end, progressing and developing as we go on with this increasing fulness of Christ, the Lord will, sooner or later, overturn that local company, and upset it, will bring the sword in and will scatter and will break down and overturn. It is the history of many a company of the Lord's people who have become merely formal and traditional, having lost their vitality and their vision.

And let us come nearer. It will be the history of

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individual lives. As soon as you and I resolve everything—teaching, doctrine, practice, and meetings—into some *thing* which is just a rota being carried on, and it loses that great, mighty, dynamic vision of the purpose of God, and loses that tremendous impact of a sense of purpose, then our own individual Christian life will come under the sword. We will just go to pieces and we will have to come to this place: 'I have been on false ground. I have been in a false position. My position has not been true, not real. All the teaching that I have received is simply something in my head, in my mind, and not a vital part of my very being. The Lord must overturn.'

That sounds very hard. But would we have it otherwise? Is it not His faithfulness to do that? To get to reality and to save a remnant that has the root of the matter in it?

THE EVER-WIDENING CONTEXT

The widening context and application you can see here, and I must remind you that Ezekiel overlapped at two ends. At one end he overlapped the ministry of Jeremiah and at the other end he overlapped the ministry of Daniel. You remember the word of the Lord which came to Jeremiah: "*I have set thee this day over the nations . . . to pluck up, to break down . . . to plant*" (Jer. i. 10). Over the nations. At the other end—Daniel. We are all familiar with how Daniel in his book is set right in the midst of the nations. We will come to that in a moment. Here is a wide context in the midst of which Ezekiel is set. There passes in review the rise and fall of the world-powers, of the peoples and nations who have exercised power and influence in the history of this world. The prophet here, Ezekiel, begins with the first four: Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia. You are not expecting or wanting that I should trace their history and give their full meaning. Sufficient to say that it was Ammon and Moab who conspired and joined hands to hire Balaam to curse Israel. Balak, King of Moab, sent for Balaam to come—"Curse me Israel". All right, Ammon. All right, Ammon.

'The mills of God grind slowly,
But they grind exceeding small:
Though with patience He stands waiting,
With exactness grinds He all.'

Ammon, Moab, you are going to be grist for God's mill! We will see. The third was Edom. And what a history Edom had as a menace to Israel and the interests of the Lord! And the fourth Philistia. Oh,

we are tired and sick of reading of the interferences with the interests of the Lord by the Philistines—'uncircumcised Philistines' as they are called. They were that constant, almost perpetual menace to the Lord's interests in Israel. These four are brought right into the 'Song of the Sword': "*I will overturn, overturn, overturn*" says the Lord. And so it was. Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia went to the sword and are no more.

The prophet passes from the first four to another two. The second two: Tyre and Zidon. In chapter xxviii of these prophecies you have one of the most amazing, startling and terrible things in the Bible: the King of Tyre. It is not difficult to see right through what is said here to Satan himself. "*Thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire*" (Ezekiel xxviii. 14 ff.). And this is said in the first context of the King of Tyre, but you can see right through this to another one, inspiring this exalting against God, this aspiring to be supreme everywhere. Read chapter xxviii again and see how terrible it is. The Zidonians are in league with Tyre. And the word reaches even unto them: "*I will overturn, overturn, overturn*". And where are Tyre and Zidon? What happened? Well, history will tell you what happened. The desolation of Tyre! It is a tremendously thrilling but startling story. The prophecy was fulfilled.

And then the prophet moves to one: Egypt. After the four and the two he comes to one: Egypt. That empire of antiquity, that wonderful civilisation, that great world-power of which many other great powers were for a long time much afraid. But Egypt comes to the sword. The same thing is said about Egypt: "*I will overturn, overturn, overturn*". And we know the history. God said, "*I will overturn, overturn, overturn*". And so it was.

And then we move into a still larger context as we overlap into Daniel, and before long the great image of Nebuchadnezzar is brought into full view. That great image, one of the four of the greatest world-powers in history—we are with the 'Big Four' here—Babylon. 'See this great Babylon that I have made!' said Nebuchadnezzar. God gave him a kingdom that all nations and peoples and tongues should bow down before him. How great was Babylon!

Then came the invasion of Cyrus, the Persian, and the supplanting of the great Babylon with the Medo-Persian Empire, which is proverbial. In our daily speech we speak about the laws of the Medes and Persians, by which is meant, something that has come to stay for ever and cannot be altered. It lifts itself against Babylon and Babylon comes

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down, and Medo-Persia takes the ascendancy.

And then another great world-power comes on the horizon. Alexander the Great rises up with his Greco-Macedonian war and treads all other powers under foot and looks for new worlds to conquer. And when he has conquered all the worlds that he can find, he passes in the pageant of empires, and then the greatest of them all appears on the scene: the Roman Empire.

All these are mentioned in Daniel, and they are presented in the great image. The great Roman Empire, the greatest of them all that had ever been, both in extent and in power. Here are the world-nations. Here are the world-empires. And the prophecy extends to them all: "*I will overturn, overturn, overturn*". Daniel tells us of the overturning when he says, after describing the vision, that there was seen a stone cut out without hands which smote the feet of the great image so that it crashed and crumbled, and was no more. And Daniel says: "In the days of those kingdoms the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom". A stone cut out without hands. The God of heaven shall set up a kingdom and it shall endure for ever. It was in the very time of the Roman Empire that the stone smote it and it crashed, and in representation it brought all the other empires down with it. 'I will overturn', said the Lord.

THE THRONE ABOVE ALL THRONES

What is the teaching of all this? In the first place, over all these there is a throne, another throne. That throne which is seen at the beginning of Ezekiel's prophecies: "*Above the firmament . . . the likeness of a throne . . . and upon the likeness of the throne was a likeness . . . of a man upon it above*" (Ezekiel i. 26). *Above!* That spreads over all these kingdoms, dominions and powers. There is a throne. To use a fragment from Daniel: "*Thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule*" (Dan. iv. 26). The *heavens* do rule, There is a throne over all. It ought to comfort us.

I have been saying hard things, painful things. Perhaps you say, gloomy things, depressing things. But what is the lesson? Over all these terrible things there is a throne. What is the explanation of the downfall of all these world-powers? There is one explanation. Every one of them sought to take the place that was eternally appointed for God's Son. God had appointed *Him* "*heir of all things*" (Hebrews i. 2). That is the Scripture. God's Son was destined heir of this world and its kingdoms. God's Son is the rightful ruler of all nations. And every

one of these had stretched out a hand to take to itself what belonged by eternal covenant to the Son of God. Spreading from Ammon and Moab, in a very limited scope, spreading out and out and out until Rome spreads itself over all the world to possess it, to possess this world: to rule and govern it for their own ends. And God said, 'Wait. That is My preserve. That is the preserve of My Son. Don't touch that. Don't lay a hand on that. That is sacred to My Son. Touch that and I will overturn, overturn, overturn until He come whose right it is: and I will give it Him.' That is history.

CONTEMPORARY HISTORY

There is still a wider context. There have been a lot of things since Rome went down. And in our own lifetime we have seen this thing happen. We do not like mentioning it. We do not like mentioning the names, but we have to in this very context. What about Hitler? Hitler aspired with his ambition and ambitiousness to dominate all the nations of this world: to bring them into subjection to his ideology and to his control: to take them. And we know how viciously he repudiated Jesus Christ and His Church. 'All right, Mr. Hitler', says the throne above, 'that is the prerogative of the Son of God. Hands off!' And we see the awful wreckage and ruin both of Hitler himself and of his régime. Some of you have seen it. Some of us have seen some of it. The awful devastation and the terrible story of his end. Christ's rights interfered with. 'I will overturn.'

And we have seen Mussolini having made for him a great relief map of the ten kingdoms of the Roman Empire to stretch the whole width of a great hall, setting up a statue of himself and proclaiming himself as the last Caesar of the restored Roman Empire. 'All right', says the throne above, 'so far shall thy proud waves come and no further.' And look at the shame of his end. "*I will overturn, overturn, overturn.*"

But contemporary history! Our present time is seeing something bigger than any of these. Bigger than the biggest of the old great four, Rome. Bigger than these I have just mentioned. Something spreading itself in the denial of God and the denial of the Son of God and the denial of the Church of God, to be the great world-power. And the throne above says, 'If you can't read history you will learn in experience.' And the same destiny and doom is coming to it. Make no mistake about it. Why? Because this world was made for Jesus Christ. And the day is coming when the Scripture will be ful-

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filled: "The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ" (Rev. xi. 15).

'Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Doth his successive journeys run;
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.'

But note. While that is a glorious prospect, it is a terrible outlook from another standpoint. And it is a challenge. It is a challenge to us; it is a challenge to our assemblies; it is a challenge to the Church of God; it is a challenge to the world. The purpose

of God is to gather together, to reunite, all things in Christ, things in the heavens, things in the earth, "that in all things he might have the pre-eminence" (Col. i. 13). That is the purpose of God. It is of the most minute application in our lives. It is the object with which the Holy Spirit is working in our spiritual history. It is the explanation of this world's history: the rise and fall, the glory and the shame of world-powers, empires and dominions. "He must reign until he hath put all his enemies under his feet" (1 Corinthians xv. 25).

That is the message. The Lord make the application!

T. A-S.

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