



# A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY.

“A Candlestick of Pure Gold:  
of Beaten Work”

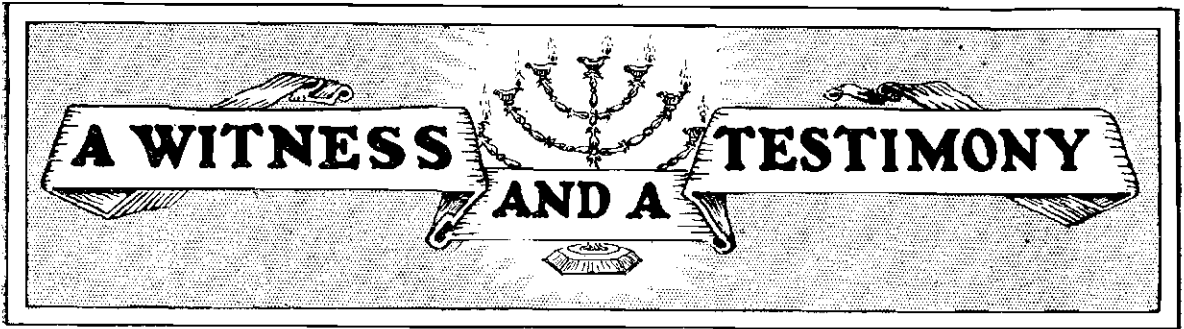
Exodus 25. 31.

“The Testimony of Jesus”

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## Editor's Letter

Beloved of God, .

It is a great joy that, with this issue of the "Witness and Testimony," we are so much nearer our pre-war size. Not quite as large as originally, but considerably larger than for all these war years. We are trusting that this is but a part of enlargement in general, so far as this ministry is concerned, and that the law of the grain of wheat is in operation again. There are not lacking signs that this may be so. Not only have we known the outward straitening which has been the lot of so much of the work of God, but never before have we experienced so intense and bitter spiritual pressure and conflict. "Pressed out of measure" has certainly been our experience, but we believe to have the other side as our testimony—"In pressure hast thou enlarged me."

We want to say again at the commencement of this year that our burden of message is the fulness of Christ. Not the establishment or extension of a Movement; not the propagation of a particular Teaching; not the constituting of a new "Fellowship"; but Christ! We have no tradition to keep going, and nothing here on this earth that we want to preserve. We think that we have seen something—however little—of God's thoughts and intentions for His Son, and if we do not follow the generally recognised and established system and order of organised Christianity it is only because we have seen how much this limits real spiritual measure and so often puts *things* in either His place or His way. We feel that the New Testament shows that the Holy Spirit can do His work quite effectively and adequately in direct spiritual ways. In some measure we have proved this through the years. Hence for silent, steady, deep, and growing spiritual work it is possible to dispense with very much that has become the strength of the Christianity of our time.

Our motto for the year embodies our experience and our faith. "I will work and who shall hinder?" God is working "all things after the counsel of his will," and that "counsel of his will" is specific and concrete. It is "the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ." That purpose is to fill all things with Christ, and to "sum up all things in Christ." To be in line with this is to be in the way of unfrustrated purpose. It then only resolves itself into a matter of whether we are more or less in *immediate* fellowship with God in His way, method, patience, and suffering. The nearer we are to His spiritual mind the greater the cost of all that it just natural or carnal or earthly. After all, it is the measure of what is essentially spiritual that matters and counts.

The Lord give us all the grace needed to "wholly follow the Lord," and to be true to the fullest spiritual value, whatever the cost. We would pray, then, that this year shall be one of very great spiritual increase—the increase of Christ—in every one of our readers, in

His whole Body, and in the securing through the preaching of Him of many fresh vessels of His indwelling.

With love and greetings in Him, our one exalted Lord,

T. AUSTIN-SPARKS

## The Meaning of Christ

### IV.

#### KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST AFTER THE SPIRIT

*"Wherefore we henceforth know no man after the flesh: even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know him so no more. Wherefore if any man is in Christ, there is a new creation" (II Cor. v. 16-17).*

I AM continuing for a little while our previous meditation. We were thinking of the uniqueness of the Son of Man, and seeking to see how Christ is the Divine meaning to and of a new race, a new creation; how in the new creation it is God's intention and undertaking to reconstitute everything according to Christ. We were especially emphasising the fact that He stands alone; there is not another, there never has been another, Son of Man in His particular sense, and that in itself indicates what God is doing. There has come out from heaven, from God, one Who is different from all others, and in the very difference itself there is implied the mind and the intention of God, inasmuch as that One has been so vitally related to the race. We were seeing how that, on the one hand, there was such a feeling that He was one with all shades, aspects and phases of the race, He fitted in—with men, women, and children: with rich and poor: with learned and unlearned. There was never a strain, an embarrassment, a sense that He was an outsider, in any one instance. He fitted in with different nationalities. On the other hand, while everybody felt His kinship with them, they also felt just as strongly how outside He was, how different. That is unique. To be so utterly other and outside and different, and not of this race in a very real sense, and yet to fit in without any friction or strain, where things are open and unforced, that is not natural. The only strain that ever arose was in the realm of prejudice and bigotry and determination not to have Him, or of wilful sin, deliberate unbelief, the closed heart.

Given the ordinary life, however varied, there was a marvellous kinship, sympathy, understanding, fellowship—and yet He was One from the outside, and One still of the outside. To reconcile those two things is the miracle of the incarnation, it is the mystery of Christ—and that is my next point.

#### In the World, but not of the World

If we are going to be conformed to His image, reconstituted inwardly on the basis of Christ, as we are to be, we are going to find this is the most difficult thing, and yet the thing that has to be. Paul in one place touches on this very thing about people becoming so exclusive in their Christianity on the matter of externals, and he says, Well, if we are going to follow that line, we might as well go right out of the world altogether, we cannot stay here (I Cor. v. 9-10). How can we be in the world and not of it, and yet possess an abiding sympathy so that we do not unnecessarily alienate people, and do not put ourselves in some exclusive position, all the time frowning on people and things and making them feel that we think ourselves different and better by what we do and the way we proceed? How difficult it is to contemplate this—to be here, to touch human life at all points in all its phases and aspects, and to touch it with sympathy and understanding and kindness and solicitude, and not always in the spirit of condemnation and detachment; and yet at the same time to register the fact unconsciously—oh, God grant that it may be unconsciously!—that we are different, we are not of it. I believe that a very great deal of harm has been done by Christians getting a wrong conception of their heavenliness. They have taken their heavenliness in a wrong way. If you walk in close touch with Christ, the heavenliness will register itself, you need not worry about it. People have been alienated, and even made antagonistic, by Christians who are all the time frowning on them, giving the impression that they are all wrong. I look again at the Master's life on earth with this thought in

mind. He comes into a situation which is wrong; He does not condone it, nor smile upon it, nor accept it, His whole nature is right outside of it; and yet His touch with the persons involved is one that does not necessarily alienate them, nor drive them away, nor provoke them, irritate them, stir them to antagonism. He comes into the situation and the effect is either that they yield to His influence and He is able to lift them out of the wrong, or they revolt positively and turn away. I could cite instances. I am asking you to look at the life of the Master with this spiritual thought in view.

Consider the woman taken in sin. Do you think He accepted that, or was sympathetic to it, or could condone it? Do you not think that there was a revulsion in Him against the thing? He could not have any fellowship with it. He might well have come to this woman with a frown and caused her to cringe, to shrink, to break out in despair. He is outside of it, you know what His nature is, but oh! He is able to come near and touch her in such a way that she is not alienated nor driven off, she is lifted and helped. Now that is a simple incident, but I say it is a most difficult thing to do in a world like this, and only Christ in us can enable us to do it; but it is something we have to look at.

What is the object of Christian teaching? It is to present us with things like this and make us face them in prayer. The teaching cannot do it, but we can take it to the Lord. We can say, Lord, here I am in this world and I have to touch things against which my soul revolts, all that is of Thee in me hates it, and I could very easily make these people feel what I feel about it, and in so doing, I could drive them away from Thee. But they have to be won, they have to feel a lift by my presence rather than a crushing. Oh, solve that problem! Really, a life in true harmony with the Lord Jesus will be like that. "As he is, even so are we in this world" (I John iv. 17). Can you meet people of this world, whose life, manner, course and system simply revolt your soul, and make them feel something better by your presence—that you are not of their way and they know it—and yet not alienate them from the Lord? I say it is one of the difficult things for us here. But I am quite sure that that is the meaning of knowing Christ not after the flesh but after the Spirit. That is one of the meanings of the new creation. We have known so many well-meaning Christians who have simply gone through the world making enemies, alienating people, making them hate Christianity. That is not Christ.

Now, the difficulty is how to do that while standing clear—without yielding, without compromise; but there is a grace of God that can do it. The Lord Jesus did it, and if there is any meaning at all in our having the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of Jesus, the meaning is practical—we can do it too. His closeness of touch, sympathy, understanding, forbearance, gentleness, longsuffering, mercifulness, and yet His complete "otherness" of nature—that is Christ after the Spirit.

### A Perfectly Balanced Life

Then I want you to note another thing about Him which has so much to do with this inward adjustment of a Spirit-governed life—it has to do with the wonderful balance in the life of the Lord. How poised He was, how balanced! Take the matter of mind, heart and will, and you find in His case those three were perfectly balanced. We are very different naturally. I suppose people as a whole can be divided up into three classes—firstly, those who are more in the realm of their head than anywhere else. They are all head in one way or another. If they are not intellectual, they are of another kind of mentality—introspective, analysing, going round things in the mind, all thinking, all puzzling, all reasoning, all working in that realm: that is the chief characteristic. You can see it almost in their faces. It is this trying to get through with the head that more or less characterises people of a certain class. Then you have another class—all heart, all feeling, all emotion. They simply live in their feelings—perhaps different forms, but still feelings. They are governed by their feelings, and just how things affect them in the realm of their emotional life. They are either up or they are down—you can never be sure, but you do know that, whether they are up or down, it is their feelings that are ruling. If only they would think a little more and not move so much on impulse, they would be more balanced. The third class—people governed by will, people of a drive, forceful, assertive. The will is unreasoning sometimes. They do not stop to think. They get a drive on, but do not think of the damage they are doing to themselves or other people. Their will overrides feeling—very good sometimes to do that, but to be all will, all of that kind of strength, determination, grip and force, oh, it is overbearing, and does a lot of harm.

People are more or less divided into those classes naturally, but you cannot find anything like that with the Lord Jesus on earth. You can find will coming in at times very strongly, and sometimes heart and sometimes mind.



Yes, mind could come in, and who could stand up against Him in that realm? Some of His answers silenced, paralysed, those who were cleverest. Look at some of the answers He gives, some of the ways He deals with a problem. They think they have Him this time, there is no way out. A simple statement, and the whole thing collapses; they have not got Him at all! But the point is this—while these things are there, they are balanced; there is never strength of will to the hurt of sensibility; there is never strength of emotion to the damage of rightful severity. He does not allow His heart to run away with His sense of judgment. He is perfectly balanced; and that is one of our needs. But that is why the Holy Spirit has come, and this is one of the things that has to take place in a Holy Spirit-ruled life. It has to become a balanced life, to be saved from being lopsided. Anything over-weighted makes going very uneven. Draw a figure of a circle, and divide it into three segments—"mind," "heart," "will." Then get a bump on "will" a little bigger than heart or mind, and make your circle into a wheel, and see how evenly you go along!—the unevenness of an unbalanced life. It makes going difficult, hard and uncomfortable.

Take the even poise of our Lord's walk here on earth. Now, what we all need is that the Spirit of Christ should come in and bring about an adjustment to Him, reconstitute us so that we go along more evenly—not one day on the heights, the next day in the depths, variable, changeable, because our soul-life is so unbalanced. We have a long way to go in this, but conformity to His image means that, amongst many other things—the bringing of a poise into life, and saving us from these terrible effects of straining, of living in one realm of our souls more than another. We do need that. We sometimes sing "And let our *ordered* lives confess the beauty of Thy peace." I tell you, I covet that—that ordered life inwardly.

But then not only were the three things in Him balanced as three things, there was a perfect balance in each one of them. There was the perfect balance of His mind, the balance of His will, the balance of His heart, in this way—you can have a mind that is a very righteous mind; and be a person who is very just and right and proper, very accurate, very alive to anything that is a little doubtful. These very righteous people are exceedingly trying to get on with, and they make for great difficulty. You may be a very righteous person in your standards, and require to have things perfectly right—well, that is good in a way, but supposing

your righteousness of mind is destroying tenderness and sympathy of judgment? I think George Eliot went to the other extreme, but there is a lot in what she said—"To understand all is to forgive all." If only we really did know more than we know, our judgments would be less severe. We should see the necessity for reconsidering our verdicts, and be a great deal more sympathetic in our attitude of righteousness. The Lord was like that. You could not have anybody whose standard of righteousness was higher than His, or as high. His standard was an inflexible standard of righteousness: you can trace that in the Gospels; and yet His righteousness was never destructive of, or injurious to, His understanding, His sympathy, His kindness. A thing may be wrong, but there are two ways of bringing home the wrong and standing for the right. One is the destructive, the hurtful; the other, while it is not a variation by a hair's-breadth from the right course, is nevertheless full of understanding and sympathy and insight. With us, it may only amount to believing that there is an explanation that we do not see, a reason that is not apparent to us, another side to the story. (There are almost always two sides to a story. You very, very rarely come upon a matter that has not got two sides to it.) The Lord Jesus lived there. He had His standard, but it was not injurious to kindness and sympathy. We need that Spirit of Christ, we need that reconstituting.

I am not going to follow this in detail into each realm. You can see that His strength of will never rode rough-shod over human susceptibilities or did damage to men's hearts. His strength of will only blazed out in full force when there was the most obvious and manifest involving of the highest principles, when He had really to withstand the thing which was a positive affront to God. Then He will have a whip and knotted cords, and you meet something that does not compromise. But at other times, you can feel the strength of His will, but you can feel that strength coming through in understanding. I venture to say that His relationship with those disciples would not have lasted three days but for this. Look at the story, and see how He bore and forbore, and went right through to the end, and did not alienate one (save that one who was already alienated from the beginning, who never really was one with Him) but He kept those whom the Father had given Him. "Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition" (John xvii. 12). But what a triumph of a balanced life! It is what in the later New

Testament is called self-control, sometimes called temperance. It is a poor translation into our English; but it means that, He was able to preserve others in the way because of this.

### The Need for Subjection to Christ's Headship

I want to pass on to the larger application of this. This is why the Word of God so often emphasises that everything in the Church must be according to Christ. He personally is the new Man; the Church His Body is the one new man. Now here in the Church, the Holy Spirit wants to constitute corporately according to Christ, and if the old man comes into the Church with his state of unbalance, and some people or individuals in the Church move along one line, and others along another line, of natural life—mind, heart or will, any particular old creation line—they destroy the Church, that is, they nullify its very conception. In the Church all is to speak of Christ, and therefore in the Church what Christ is has steadily to grow and take ascendancy over all else; and that is why there must be in the Church utter subjection to Christ's Headship. We have such mental pictures about words like that—Christ, the Head of the Body. Do you not see that the Headship of Christ is a spiritual thing? Of course, we are perhaps not thinking that it is a physical thing, but somehow we do get an idea that it is an official thing. It is not physical and it is not official; it is spiritual. That means that Headship is in virtue of certain spiritual properties, a spiritual nature; and when we talk about becoming subject to Christ, and coming under the Headship of Christ, we are only speaking figuratively of being subjected to what Christ is—that He really does come on like the head and stands over, and everything is adjusted to Him and takes its nature from Him; just as our bodies take their direction from our heads, if we are normal people. Just as we live from our heads, and our character and nature and actions and speech are all controlled by the head, so the nature of the Church is taken from the nature of Christ; and what the Lord is seeking to get is a Church which does express what Christ is—this balance. Yes, His strength, but also His love; His truth and light, yes, but equally His life. Oh, we can have such a preponderance of light and truth—all head—and little heart. I have known, on the other hand, companies where all is heart, the people falling on one another's necks, with effusive terms of so-called love, and yet they are not growing, not coming to a place of responsibility. It sounds and looks like love,

but underneath there is something lacking. They need instruction, they need edifying. When the Body is fitly framed and compacted, balanced, brought into proper articulation and harmony, taking its nature and its character from Christ and therefore governed by what He is as the new creation Man, then you are getting what God is after; and you can have that in a local company and in local companies, which thereby become, not places that stand for some extraordinary truth, something different from all other teachings, and all the time trying to get hold of something that is extraordinary and remote from common recognition—no, you simply get there an embodiment and an expression of Christ, and that is all that God wants, and all we ought to want. People meeting us as companies as well as individuals will be meeting something that touches them. They will say, If only there were more of this, the world would be a different place, and yet this is something so outside the realm of human possibility that only God could do this; this is God! It requires Almighty God, and yet here it is, it touches us, we see that this is what is needed! Oh, the tragedy in this connexion in these days! You hear it on the wireless almost any day; you find the literature of our day just crowded with it—the recognition of the fact that if only things were on the line of Christ, if only Christ's teaching were put into practice, if only Christ, and what He was, really were here and expressed, how different the world would be! There is plenty of recognition and acknowledgment of that; but on the other side, men at once begin to say, Well, let us get busy on this, we will do this and that to bring it about. They do not recognise that this is a miracle from heaven, and that it has to come in by a birth, a reconstituting, a new creation fiat. That is where the gap is, and the tragedy, and men fall between the two. But we know better; there He is, and there His Spirit is to do it. It seems to take a long time. A little bit of conformity to His image seems to occupy almost a lifetime. But nevertheless He is doing something, it does make a difference to have Christ; there are many changes because Christ has come in—we do know that. There are going to be greater changes yet. After all, whatever we may say about the poverty of things in the Church, the world would be a poor place if the people of God were taken out of it; and it will be, when they have gone. There is something here that is not of the world, and the world needs it. The Lord help us to see Christ and get continually to Him for this conformity to His image, this taking

of the Spirit of Christ, this inward reconstituting after the Son of Man, a new creation in Christ Jesus.

T. A-S.

## Building in Troublous Times

*"Know therefore and discern, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the anointed one, the prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: it shall be built again, with street and moat, even in troublous times" (Dan. ix. 25).*

It shall be built again, . . . even in troublous times." Most of us will not need convincing as to the troublous times. Let us be equally emphatic—"It shall be built again." We ought to read in this connexion several chapters from the book of Nehemiah. They present the practical fulfilment of the word of prophecy—for there is a practical side to the Lord's word. Nehemiah and those with him came into the experience of this prophecy; it was built again. And you may ask Nehemiah and the others if it is true that it was built in troublous times, and I think they will agree that that is a very mild description. We could spend a great deal of profitable time considering this whole matter of the building, but I want to bring a simple emphasis to you, and that is that the troublous times are vitally related to the building, and the troublous times of which we are all more or less aware are directly intended to hinder the building.

### Opposition to the Building

You will notice a kind of crescendo of antagonism in proportion as the work goes on. When Nehemiah first arrived and began to contemplate the proposition, Sanballat and Tobiah, when they heard of it, grieved exceedingly (Neh. ii. 10). We read in Chapter iv. 1 "But it came to pass that, when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation"; and later on in that same chapter, when half the wall was built all round, it says that Sanballat and Tobiah and the rest of them, hearing that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem went forward, "then they were very wroth." You see how it piles up; because the building is going on, the antagonism gets fiercer and fiercer. Every time the inner counsels of these men are disclosed, you find that they had no particular enmity against Nehemiah or against the rest of the people of God so long as they were idle and content to dwell amid the ruins; but it was the building, the positive construction, the recovery

of that which really represented Divine purpose, the object of God-given prophecy—as soon as that began to be contemplated, there was antagonism. When the work was begun there was wrath, and as the work progressed there was much more wrath. That is what it is all about. Have you been asking yourself concerning the troubles and perplexities—What is it all about? This is what it is all about. They of old gave their hands to Nehemiah. By Divine grace, we have given our hands to the Lord, to pursue His purpose, and out of the ruins of that which has been shame for Him to build up that which shall be for His glory. In proportion as our hearts have been found devoted to that task and ourselves given to that work, in the same proportion the troublous times are very evident. Now that is meant, I think, to be an interpretation for us and explains a lot, and it is also an inspiration.

You notice the positive terms in which Daniel speaks. "It shall be built again." The Lord knew all about the troublous times long before they arrived; before Sanballat and Tobiah arose, the Lord anticipated them. No doubt the people of God might have enjoyed building the wall without any opposition, but I think the more enlightened would have wondered whether, after all, this was the thing. Was it the real thing?—because God had said this thing would be withstood, it would be in the midst of turmoil and trouble and bitterness and conflict that His testimony should arise from the ruins. The trouble came all right, and it does come; but I think Nehemiah went back to the word of Daniel and found not only the troublous time, but the Divine assurance—"it shall be built again." It is very refreshing not once or twice to find that, after he has described some particular form of wickedness that sought to overturn the work, instead of pursuing what would be the logical opening up of the narrative and saying, "So we were not able to build the wall, Nehemiah says, Such and such happened, so we built the wall! The more evil came, the more they built. Surely there is a Divine inspiration to faith in the very opposition of the enemy, and it works like that. When things are easy, when things seem to be uncontested, that is when, logically, the building should go on; but how often it is not so. Heavenly logic is so different from earthly logic. When everything is contrary, then the



work proceeds and the building goes on.

But we need to have our eyes opened, and chapters iii to vi of Nehemiah give us many helpful indications of the kind of thing the Devil does. I doubt whether he is very original, after all. He seems to repeat himself again and again. We read the Word, we read of things that happened centuries ago, and exactly the same things happen again. But it is strange that, although we know all about them theoretically, when they come they very nearly achieve their object; the things that we know all about so often overcome us.

### The Weapon of Ridicule

The beginning is a most simple thing, the weapon of a child—ridicule. That is how they began, and in this critical, disdainful way, they stood around and laughed at the people as they began their work of building. Nehemiah had to turn back to the Lord and say, "Hear, O our God; for we are despised" (iv. 4). Well, what does it matter? Let our hearts answer what it matters. Do you like being laughed at, do you like being despised?—and the Devil chooses for his tools the people whose opinion matters to us. There are certain folk, certain realms of society and life, which, the more they despise us, the more in a sense do they confirm us in our faith; but Satan is a past-master in finding a direction from which this weapon of ridicule has such a powerful effect to weaken our hands, to make us desist from the purpose that God has put into our hearts. It is a very old stratagem of the Devil, but it is right up to date, and he will find quarters from which criticism coming to us will be accepted, and our hands weakened from the work. The feebleness that is ours, the blemishes that mark us, this fault and that fault—it all comes back to us. There is only one purpose behind it, and that is to weaken our hands, that we should accept this poor, low estimate, not merely of ourselves, but of the possibility of our fulfilling the task—that we should accept despair, and the work should cease. They got through, but it was touch and go; Nehemiah had to cry to God. We have to be very much alive to this weapon of the devil—the suggested impossibility, the hopelessness, the folly, of seeking to do what we *know* to be the purpose of God in Christ. Well, that was only the beginning of a very long story.

### The Weapon of Confusion

"They conspired all of them together to come and fight against Jerusalem, and to cause confusion therein. But we made our prayer

unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night" (iv. 8-9). This evidently was not a frontal attack of the kind that was later contemplated to destroy them. This was some subtle idea that they had of introducing themselves amongst the children of Israel to cause confusion. If you read the previous chapter, you will find the building was an orderly process. Everyone was in his right place, and thus the work proceeded. And so I presume that this attempt to bring confusion was to get people out of their place, to get them all mixed up. And the work was not only orderly; it was co-operative, they all built together; and the confusion, I suppose, would be to set them one against the other. And Nehemiah said, We had to pray to God to save us from confusion. We need to pray that for ourselves and for the people of God. And he said, We not only prayed about it; we kept watch day and night, we were on the lookout so that we should not be set one against another and get cut of our place. We need to pray about it and we need to watch. Of course—and that is the very essence of the strategy of the Devil—we are apt to feel that it is somebody else's fault that things are wrong, and all kinds of personal considerations will be brought in. But do remember once again—what is Satan's purpose? It is to bring confusion. And what will confusion mean?—that the work will be stopped. And how very often in lives, in homes, in the assemblies of the Lord's people, in the Church and the work of the Lord in larger realms, when the first weapon of ridicule has failed, how often has success been achieved by this stratagem of setting people one against the other in disorder, challenging, disputing, and suspicious of one another. "We made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night" that that should not happen, and it did not happen, and so the building went on. Praise God! Let us do likewise.

### The Weapon of Discouragement

But there was more: and really we cannot blame Sanballat and his allies for this—this one further opposition which proves how much the thing is spiritual, and how the human instruments, after all, only represent something of deeper antagonism behind. The next thing that happened was that among the people of God themselves trouble arose. Judah said—Judah above all people—"The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall" (Neh. iv. 10). The antagonism has changed from that outward phase to an inward



and spiritual one. First of all, the consciousness of insufficiency—we are getting tired, we are getting weary, we have not the strength. Now Judah above all people is the one who is to praise the Lord, but praise is silenced when Judah begins to look at himself. There is no praise then, there is despair. We cannot build, we have not the strength! And how subtle and strong and persistent is this pressing home upon us of our hopelessness. It may be a new sense of our own spiritual hopelessness, it may be a pressure upon our souls, it may be pressure upon our bodies, but there is one purpose behind it—that we should accept the inward conviction that we cannot go on, we have not the strength, we must give up. There is no song when we are looking at ourselves, there is despair. The only way through for Judah is to do what he ought to have done then—to be true to his name and praise the Lord. There is strength in God even when our strength is decayed.

That was on the one hand—they were impressed with their hopelessness. On the other hand, they were appalled by the rubbish that had to be cleared away. What was the rubbish? I take it that, among other things, it was that which had served a purpose, but which had no value any longer, and they had come to realise how much in their circumstances and in their lives, that in its time had seemed to be of value to the Lord, was proving now to be so much rubbish in the way, an impediment, a hindrance to the building. Sometimes that comes upon us, and it needs to. I think it is well that we should take note of this. You can see it in other people's lives sometimes (it is no doubt true of all) how the building is held up by the accumulation of things in their past spiritual history that may have had a value, but now are in the Lord's way. Said Judah, when they looked at all that—It is no use, it is purposeless, it is hopeless to attempt to get that out of the way and build something which really is in the Divine plan. Many children of God who have overcome others of these subtle temptations of which we have spoken have themselves been brought to a standstill by this; they have been overwhelmed, held up, by the accumulation of that

which, shall we say, is traditional in the church, or actual in their own experience—that has had a past but has no present and no future; and they lack the resolution of faith to clear it out of the way and get on with the building.

Nehemiah does not tell us what happened, he does not give us the inner history, but evidently they overcame this temptation.

### The Spur to Fresh Faith

But there were other tests. It is impossible for us now to go into them in detail. It will be a profitable occupation for you to take these chapters and trace the very many factors that were present in the building, the combined tendency of which was to prevent its accomplishment; and at the same time to look to the end of the story, and say, Well, in spite of it all, praise the Lord, the wall was built, it was finished! "It shall be built again, even in troublous times." Can we take hold of that?

Troublous times these are for us all, but the troublous times are meant to provoke us to fresh faith. First of all, take note that the troublous times are not a strange accident. It is not brother or sister So-and-so who is the cause of the trouble; in a sense, it is not ourselves; though we all have part. It is the fiendish work of the Devil. He will let us alone as long as nothing is happening, but he is up in arms when there is the prospect of building something for God. May I bring again the simple words of affirmation?—"It shall be built again." God is more than enough, He has the answer every time. Nehemiah was not always able to perceive the nature of the temptation and the assault, but he was always able to overcome by keeping his eyes on the Lord and on the work. When they tried to get him away, he did not know the real nature of the call, but he was four times saved from a trap by keeping the purpose in view, and by saying "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down" (vi. 3). That is the way through—to keep our eyes on the purpose and, above all, to keep our eyes on the Lord, never minding the troublous times. It shall be built!

H.F.

## "Gashmu Saith It"

It is amazing that so many people acquire reputations as oracles merely by circulating baseless rumours. There is a very suggestive word in that treasury of practical wisdom, the book of Nehemiah, in the sixth

chapter and the sixth verse. The enemies of the Jews sent a letter to Nehemiah "wherein was written, It is reported among the heathen, and *Gashmu saith it*, that thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest

the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words."

*God's builders must always expect that their motives will be impugned.* Every man who has been used of God to build some part of the walls of Jerusalem has been charged with egotism, with a desire to exalt himself and make himself king. He may have received the clearest commission from God to do the work in which he is engaged, and may be confirmed in his conviction of duty, as Nehemiah was, by "the hand of my God which was upon me"; but all that will avail nothing to silence the criticism of Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian. God's builders have always to face the tongue of misrepresentation and slander. We have sometimes thought it is the Devil's device to occupy the people of God by tempting them to spend their time in refuting his slanders.

Nehemiah was informed that certain things were "reported" about him. Thus do the sharp tongues of the wicked endeavour to strike to the heart of God's faithful ones: "They say 'everybody believes'; 'it is the general opinion'; 'it is reported'!" In this way an attitude and an atmosphere is created;

and usually there is someone to stamp with his personal authority that which is "reported," and to accelerate the speed of the circulating rumours: "And *Gashmu saith it*."

So far as we are able to determine, *Gashmu* served no useful purpose in the world except to credential the enemy's slanders. "*Gashmu saith it*". *Gashmu* has wrecked many a church. We have seen people become important messengers of what "*Gashmu saith*"—'Of course, I do not know the facts myself; I am not on the inside of matters; I am not taken into counsel—but when Mr. So-and-so says it, you may be sure there is something in it.' Which being interpreted is to say, "It is reported . . . and *Gashmu saith it*"! Since *Gashmu* has so long been vocal, it is perhaps vain even to hope that he will cease from his talking. But what shall we set over this irritant, that "*Gashmu saith it*"? The best of all answers is a "Thus saith the Lord." Let a man be commissioned by a word from heaven, he will then be able to go on with his work until all the breaches in the walls are stopped. He will be able to do all in spite of what "*Gashmu saith*."

SELECTED.

## "He That is Spiritual"

### I.

"So also it is written, *The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam a life-giving spirit. . . . The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is of heaven*" (1. Cor. xv. 45, 47).

"*That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit*" (John iii. 6).

"*God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth*" (John iv. 24).

"*He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit*" (1. Cor. vi. 17).

"*As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. . . . ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father*" (Rom. viii. 14-15).

"*Furthermore, we had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?*" (Heb. xii. 9).

"*Now the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged.*

*But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, and he himself is judged of no man*" (1. Cor. ii. 14, 15).

### Spirituality the Key to All That is of God

**A** FRAGMENT from that last passage will do as the key to our consideration. "He that is spiritual." A spiritual state is the key to all that is of God. Spirituality is the door, and the key to the door, beyond which lies everything that relates to God. Without spirituality, there is no way through, the door is closed. The word "cannot" stands written as an impassable barrier—"cannot understand or receive the things of the Spirit of God." In reality, our lives are set in a realm of things spiritual. God is Spirit, therefore the supreme Reality, the supreme factor, the ultimate environment of this universe—God—is Spirit. Man, in the deepest and truest nature of his being, is spirit. He has a soul and a body. Evil forces in great power encircle man on this earth, and they are spiritual forces. But more, the entire temporal order is constituted upon spiritual principles and meanings. The visible things are but symbols of spiritual things; the seen

things are types of unseen things. God has constituted this whole universe, in every aspect and detail, upon a basis of spiritual principles; they are tokens of something more than themselves. If God, Who is Spirit, makes anything, He makes it with a meaning, and that meaning is given to it by the mind of God. It takes its deepest significance from God Himself, therefore its deepest significance is spiritual. It is unnecessary, I am quite sure, and would take a very long time (although it would be tremendously profitable as well as interesting) to follow that out, and look at this seen, tangible, temporal universe and track down its spiritual significance; but it is a very simple line of consideration. We know how, right through the Bible, these things of creation are used to represent spiritual things. The sun, the moon, the stars, and every other created thing embodies some spiritual thought, meaning and law, so that, when we come to the revelation of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit, we find a whole comprehensive and detailed counterpart, in a spiritual realm, of what we have in the temporal realm; a new creation in Christ Jesus with its initiation by God, Who said, Let light shine out of darkness, and who shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (II. Cor. iv. 6). Here is the new creation act, the new fiat for bringing in a spiritual order, which, in a spiritual way, reproduces all the laws which lie behind the creation of the natural order. We cannot follow that through now, but bear it in mind. It is a very strong and very full realm by which we can recognise really what God is after through and in and by all things.

If we were only to come down to our own personal physical makeup, and had we the knowledge of our own physical bodies sufficiently, we should be able to trace spiritual laws operating through and through in almost every part. I am almost tempted to yield to the fascination of such a consideration, but I will leave that to more expert people. But there it is; God has constituted our very bodies upon spiritual principles; we are, in ourselves, a material representation of spiritual laws, and when the Holy Spirit, through the Apostle, speaks of the Church as the Body of Christ, He is not only using an illustration, He is saying that a whole system of spiritual laws which operates in the physical body of an individual, operates in a spiritual way in the spiritual Body of Christ, the Church. Just as the violation of any one of those laws or principles of the physical brings about an unbalanced state which will lead to disintegration and finally

to death, so in the Church the same laws obtain: violate any one of those laws, and you render the Church unbalanced, it will move to disintegration and out of its realm of vital things. I must not be detailed.

I am stating this, that the key to everything that is of God is spirituality. Here in I Cor. xv., the Apostle is saying much about the spiritual side of things, and amongst those statements he says concerning the body that not that which is spiritual is first but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual. We might observe, by the way, that when he used that word "natural" he really used the word "soulical." That which is first is the soulical body and afterward that which is spiritual, indicating that the ultimate and final thought of God is the spiritual. The Apostle leads on very clearly to show that this body, this soulical body *as such*, is going to be changed. But there is a germ—the spirit is the germ—of a new body, and that spirit will be clothed with a spiritual body. It is something that we cannot wholly understand, but we can see something of what it is like when we remember that the forty days after the resurrection of our Lord Jesus were used precisely for this very purpose—to demonstrate and establish the nature of a spiritual man in his final and full constitution, visibly, as well as spiritually. There is no doubt that in those forty days the Apostles were convinced that Jesus was alive, that they had seen the Lord; they were left without a shadow of doubt—nothing could shake them on that matter. But what a Lord, what a difference!—an absence altogether of some things with which they were familiar. He was there, and He was there in a positive presence—not a ghost, not a disembodied spirit, but a full Manhood; and yet how different! He was using the forty days to show what the end of God is for man, the nature of things when God reaches His end. "Afterward that which is spiritual." God's final, ultimate thought is the spiritual, and I want to emphasize that for this purpose—that I am not talking about vapours and shadows and spooks and ghosts, and things floating about in the air. I am not talking about atmospheres, but about something very real—if I may use the word, very concrete—when I talk about spirituality. It is something very practical. The Lord Jesus sought surely to show that after His resurrection. "Children, have ye any meat?" He can make a fire of coals, He can cook fish on it, He can break the food and distribute it and He can eat with them, and yet in a moment can be out of sight. Dismissing time and



geography, He is in one place and then in another far off, but He is real. Do not let us think we are talking about spirituality as something unpractical, mythical, abstract. We are going to see that it is a very practical matter; first that which is natural, and afterward, as the final thought and the goal of God's activities, that which is spiritual. The end and the eternal will be spirituality; we shall be in the full sense spiritual. Well, that is a general statement.

### Temporal Things Governed by the Law of Vanity

Now let us get down to it more and more closely. We begin, then, by recognising that the world of things temporal is only a shadow of another, that it has no abiding qualities or values in itself. It is governed by the law of vanity, vanity meaning simply that it cannot of itself realise its own destiny. It will reach a point, and from that point turn back and in upon itself; its efforts, its groanings, its travailings, never issue in a final realisation of its intention. Nothing of it, by its own properties, can realise Divine purposes and ends. It is very important to recognise this.

As we get closer to this matter, we see how it applies specifically to Christian work. Oh, how many things are gathered into organised Christianity with the idea of making for effectiveness! The idea is that, if you can have these things, you are going to get results. Money—oh, how much could be done if only we had money! We must have the money! I ask you, how was it in the book of the Acts? Was anything done? With all the money today, how much is done of an abiding, eternal, spiritual value? If only you can get names and titles on your programmes and advertisements, you are going to effect something! Are you? If you can get reputation, scholarship, learning, ability, physical strength, business acumen, the work will be effected! Will it? I want to say that not in one of these things, nor in all of them put together, *in themselves*, is there any spiritual value, and there can be a very vast amount of spiritual value without any of them. God has taken pains along both lines to prove that. Along the line of their presence in abundance He has proved their spiritual futility; and along the line of taking the weak things and the despised and the foolish and the things which are not, by something which was nothing in itself He has through the ages demonstrated His own power and done mightily fruitful things for eternity. Well, that is simple and obvious, and it is only one more contribution to this fact, that it is

spirituality that counts, that is the effective thing, the thing that gets through, and nothing else. The learning, the money, and all the other things may have a place, provided they do not govern, provided they are subservient to what is spiritual and are never banked upon as the things which are going to do the work: provided it is never assumed that if you have these things, a great work for God can be done; God will make evident the folly of that assumption. A whole range of things is employed by organised Christianity to secure Divine ends, but it does not work. Well, that is the first thing that we note in connection with spirituality.

### Our Reconstitution as Spiritual Beings

We proceed in the next place to recognise that for spiritual—that is Divine, eternal, ultimate—purposes, we have to be reconstituted on a spiritual level and basis. That, of course, is the very heart of John iii. Nicodemus is interested in, and concerned about, the Kingdom of God, wanting to know about it, and has come to the Lord Jesus by night, evidently to talk about it. He had, like all other Israelites, an entirely temporal conception of the Kingdom, an earthly idea. It was formal, an official matter. The Lord Jesus does not waste any time at all with that. He simply brushes it all aside, ignores it, and says, "Ye must be born anew." "Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God." That is elementary, but we are coming to this fact, that, in order to know anything at all about the things of God (and I take the Kingdom of God to be that realm in which all that obtains is of God, that which belongs to God) we have to be constituted according to God. Nothing is possible until we are reconstituted on a new principle, until we are, in other words, constituted spiritual beings in a new way. The very beginnings of things in relation to God are that they are a new and altogether other constitution, just as absolute as would be the reconstituting of us to live a fish's life—and perhaps more so. We have to begin over again. For the very first thing of God, that is necessary. I know that I am not saying anything that is new in itself to you, but I feel very much that there has to be a reconsideration of the whole Christian conception of things if we are going to have effectiveness.

The ideas of doing God's work, and of what His work is, are very often far from the truth. The ideas of the means by which God would work are very often largely outside of the pale of God's acceptance. We are con-



cerned with real spiritual effectiveness, are we not? Then we have to learn the secret of it; that is what we are after. There is a crippling, paralysing "cannot" resting upon the natural, the soulical man, where the things of God are concerned; and yet how much of that soulical life is employed and relied upon in Christianity to-day to secure spiritual ends! If only you can get high-tensioned atmospheres, a good deal of stir and movement and emotion; if only you can get certain conditions brought about by a forceful, powerful personality with its impact upon the people; then you will get results! And a great deal of result is obtained, but it is not spiritual, it is not abiding and eternal. But unfortunately, the consequences are not limited to that. There issues ever more and more this great tragedy of people having tried and been disappointed and determining never to try again. The world is strewn with people who have had an experience and no more. Oh, the devil is clever!

We are saying that there is an unbridged gulf between the natural and the spiritual, and there can be no carry over; and yet in the Christianity of our day, there is a tremendous carry-over of the natural to the spiritual. We find the realm of God's things is simply full of natural elements, and they are all paralysing the spiritual. There has to be a tremendous removal of all this smother and cover of natural elements—men coming in with their drive and their ideas and conceptions and ways. It is killing the work of God. Until that is really dealt with in the power of the Cross of our Lord Jesus and all set aside, and God is free to do His own work by His own means along His own lines, there will be no commensurate result. God's means and God's way is spirituality from start to finish, the impact of a spiritual constitution. Yes, there is an unbridged gulf between the natural (the soulical) and the spiritual, and there can be no carry over. Look at the fact. It is so often very striking that a person of very considerable natural acumen, learning, intelligence and ability in this world is nothing in real spiritual things, though he be a Christian. Are you not often up against that? A Christian man may be tremendously able in business affairs and most acute in his business transactions, full of intelligence and worldly wisdom, able to carry the weight of an immense concern, to be the driving force of a great business, a man of weight and consideration in this world, but when it comes to spiritual things he may be a babe. You speak about the things of the Lord, and that great brain is altogether beaten by the simplest things of the spiritual life.

You can get nowhere in talking about the Lord. I am often amazed as I meet and talk with Christian men who are carrying great responsibilities and who have undoubtedly great abilities, and when you talk about spiritual things they are unable to say anything, to make any contribution; you are talking in another realm. And yet they know they are born again, and they have been so for a long time. What is the matter? Well, there is a gulf. They have all that greatness on the natural side, but they are very small on the spiritual. All that they have of intellectual ability and equipment, and power in every way to handle big things naturally, serves them in no stead whatever when they come to handle the things of God; whereas somebody who has none of it, in the realm of things spiritual is a giant, a teacher. Well, that is a commonplace in our experience.

But it comes right back to this, that there is a gulf, and there is no real bridging of this gulf, there is no carrying from one side to the other. The word "cannot" stands there. Here the word is not about the unregenerate, the grossly sinful. It is the Christian who is still natural, living on the basis of his soul, rather than in the realm of his renewed spirit. The natural man "cannot." That is the closed door in things spiritual. Whatever he is in things natural, in things spiritual he is a babe or a fool.

#### Counterfeit Spirituality

Now we come to the next thing, the recognition that there is a false and counterfeit spirituality which is purely soulical. It looks like spirituality, and passes for it, it assumes to be spiritual; but it is false, it is counterfeit. We find it in mysticism, and mysticism can go a very long way to simulate what is spiritual. Æstheticism so often looks like spirituality and has been mistaken for it. There is a vast amount of religion that thinks it is spiritual and claims to be, and yet it is purely æsthetic or mystical or soulical; it is not spiritual at all. There is a soulical insight which is the counterfeit of spiritual apprehension. It is purely psychic. Have you met people who see through, and get an insight into things in a remarkable way, and yet they are not spiritual people? They have a psychical insight, their souls are highly tuned to things which are not ordinarily apparent. We have often been impressed with this and puzzled by it. They can talk about the devil, the spiritual system, use the Bible language; they can talk about things of the Bible and get behind the actual written language, in some re-

mote kind of way getting out interpretations which are not obvious. There are certain national constitutions which are peculiarly characterised by this very thing. I believe the Galatians were like that. If you trace the history of the Galatians, you will see that this is the peculiarity of a race. The people of Gaul, from whom the Galatians came, are like that. There is something psychic about them, and it looks like spiritual insight and understanding. It is false. You can have it in its extreme form; you can have it in more moderate forms. There is a counterfeit spirituality along that line, counterfeit spiritual knowledge which is simply mystical interpretation. There are people with phraseology and they are not clear, they are involved, and what are they after? They are trying to be spiritual on the basis of revelation, seeing things no one else sees or can see. Be careful! The enemy does simulate every truth in order to destroy the truth. We have to be in a true position, and there is this counterfeit, mystical interpretation. You can drive typology to an extreme, you can force it to a point where it loses its value and becomes almost ridiculous. Spiritual discernment is counterfeited, and shows itself along the line of premonitions and second sight; it is all soulical. Consecration is often counterfeited by asceticism, a false consecration. The monasticism of the Middle Ages and what remains of it is a false interpretation of spirituality, of consecration. It is purely soulical, and of what real spiritual value is it to anybody? Life can be, and so often is, counterfeited; exhilaration, even hysteria, is thought to be spiritual life. You know how we are all prone to this. There are times when we get a wonderful exhilaration by a presentation, a prospect opening, and for the moment we feel it is all alive. We give it a chance, we test it out, we wait a while. The thing dies out in us. Where is all the life we had about it? It was merely an exhilaration, something that appealed to our souls and found a response there. Therefore test things, give them time, take them into another atmosphere and see how they live. It is so easy to get into a false position when there is a hot-house condition, you can get a lot of things springing up rapidly and seeming to be genuine growths. But take them outside and they shrivel up. The things of God do not do that, they survive all atmospheres, they live though death encompasses. His life is not a prey to earthly conditions; it triumphs. Everything can be counterfeited, and there is a counterfeit spirituality along every line.

Note the difference, then, between what is

truly spiritual and what is falsely so. Is it not patent that the more the formalism, the ritual, the external order, the less the real spiritual life, food and fulness? You cannot have more formalism and ritual and that whole system of things than you get in St. Peter's in Rome, but I challenge you to be really spiritually alive and in touch with God, and be able to live in that atmosphere. It is one of the things that stands out in my own experience. I always had a desire to see St. Peter's, and I went, and I was glad to get out of the place. It was death, suffocation. But I would not accept that finally. I went back again after years, I have been several times. At last I had to say, That is finished, no more of that! It is not only death, but there is something evil, something that grieves the Spirit of God in you. And yet look at it—see them prostrating themselves, their “adoration,” their “worship”; but it is death. That may be the extreme end of things, but that can be graduated and modulated; and let me say without any hesitation, the measure of external ritual and formalism and that sort of thing determines the measure of spirituality. The more you have of that, the less you have of true spiritual life, of real spiritual food. A real life with the Lord is something very simple, shorn of all the art of religion; a few children of God gathered together in something which has no ecclesiastical traditions, no religious embellishments, no external forms, but just a simple meeting in the Name of the Lord: there you have life, power, fulness. I am not saying that things must be shoddy in order to have spirituality: I am saying that the law of life is spirituality.

It works in another way. The nearer to earth we get, the more we ourselves feel our importance. Man is biggest when he is nearest to the earth; he is smallest when he is farthest away. I remember my first time in an aeroplane; at ten thousand feet up, I looked down on the ground that meant so much weary toil to cross. It looked only inches big, the people and animals were like toys. The nearer to heaven you get, the less important are the things of earth. All this religious embellishment is the importance of the earth, of the world. The nearer you get to things spiritual and heavenly, the less of that you want, it all goes; you see how really petty and insignificant it is. See the Church from heaven, and all this that goes on down here is like playing at going to church, it is so small. There is a great deal of difference in the spiritual constitution.

To sum up what I am saying, it is this.

Spirituality rightly understood is the secret of all that belongs to God. At the very beginning of our life with God, we have to be re-constituted as spiritual beings. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." "He that is spiritual." "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." But there is a false thing to counterfeit and simulate spirituality, and it is not objective to ourselves, it is made out of ourselves. We make gods after our own likeness, our souls produce their own system, even in religion; and the Spirit produces *His* system. Said the woman to the Master, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." The Lord Jesus said, "Woman, believe me, the hour

cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father . . . God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (John iv. 20-24). That is only saying, This Mount Gerizim and its temple and the temple in Jerusalem are purely temporal, earthly, the things of men's souls. Men must have something to see, to handle, something they can appreciate by their soul faculties, but that is not the realm of things since I, the Lord, have come. That is the natural, it is past. Now, the spiritual comes—neither here nor there, not a matter of place or things or anything like that on the earth. It is in spirit with the Father.

That is the order, that is the nature and character of this dispensation.

T. A-S.

## For Boys and Girls

### Gospel Messages from the Antarctic (No. 1)

**W**E propose, if the Lord wills, to insert in each of our next few issues a message for you based upon incidents mentioned in a thrilling book entitled "The Worst Journey in the World." The book was written by one of the men who went with Capt. Scott in 1911 to the Antarctic Continent. Many of you will have heard of the heroic expedition which ended with the death of Capt. Scott and some of his companions on their way back from the South Pole.

In order that you may all understand the stories, let me first of all tell you something of the conditions of that part of the world.

Do you enjoy very, very cold wintry days in our country, when the ice is thick upon the ponds and the ground as hard as iron, or when snow lies thickly everywhere, or a bitterly cold wind blows that seems to carry your very ears away? You may enjoy the fun of a few such days, but would you like it to be like that all the year round—only very much worse most of the year—with the hottest summer day seldom if ever as warm as our coldest winter day? And how would you like a country where the night in winter and the day in summer is four months long? I am sure you would not like to live under such conditions. But it is like that on the Antarctic Continent—a great stretch of land in the south of our earth surrounding what is called the South Pole. Not very much is known of it, for only a few explorers have ever visited it. It is a land of ice and snow and howling winds. Where the sea is not frozen seals and other creatures are found, and strange birds called penguins (you

may have seen some at the Zoo) live near the water's edge. But on the land away from the sea nothing lives at all, either animal or bird or vegetable; it is a barren waste—a wilderness indeed! Little by little its secrets are being discovered and with the help of aeroplanes the task is becoming easier. But when Capt. Scott and his party went there they had no aeroplanes to help them and all their journeys had to be made on foot. But in spite of the tremendous difficulties and dangers they pressed on, and some even died on the way. How nobly those men suffered in a cause that was dear to their hearts! and if you and I could have said to them in the presence of all the perils and trials: Do you not think the sufferings too great? I think they would have answered in a way which would remind us of Paul of old who spoke thus:

" . . . I go . . . not knowing the things that shall befall me . . . save that bonds and afflictions abide me. . . . But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course . . . and the ministry which I have received . . ." (Acts xx. 22-24, A.V.).

They suffered courageously—and yet their task was only an earthly one of exploring a new land on the earth which even when discovered seems to be of only small value to men. Paul's task was far, far nobler—that of exploring, and then bringing to other men the knowledge of, a *heavenly* land; and that heavenly land was not a barren waste of ice and snow and bitter winds, but a land "flowing with milk and honey"—'a good land, a land of brooks of water . . . a land of wheat



and barley and vines and fig trees and pomegranates . . . a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack anything in it . . . (Deut. viii. 7-9). Do you know what that land is? Perhaps you guess Palestine? You would be right in a sense, for Palestine is an *earthly* picture of the land referred to. But the land itself is a *heavenly* one, and is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. A land to explore indeed! What wonders in it! What surprises meet you at every turn! What riches there are! How vast it is! Nobody has ever yet explored it all; and those who know most of it are still pressing on to discover more. Listen to Paul at the end of his life—the man who perhaps knew more of that heavenly land than any other that has ever lived:

“ . . . Christ Jesus my Lord . . . for whom I suffered the loss of all things . . . that I may gain Christ and be found in him . . . that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings. . . . Forgetting the things which are behind . . . I press on toward the goal . . . ” (Phil. iii. 8-14).

Do you observe the two words “suffered” and “sufferings”? Must we suffer in learning to know Him? We may know *something* of Him without much cost, but the richest treasures and the deepest secrets of that land are only to be found by a costly way. Shall we shrink back because of this? If we are tempted to do so, let us remember how fearlessly Capt. Scott and his men suffered to gain

earthly knowledge. How much more worthwhile is the heavenly! And there are always these tremendous promises for us to lay hold of as we go on with our heavenly exploring:

“God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able . . . ” (I Cor. x. 13).

and

“God is able to make all grace abound unto you; that ye, having always all sufficiency in everything, may abound unto every good work . . . ” (II Cor. ix. 8).

Have you started exploring the land yet? If not, you will not be able to enjoy or understand fully the stories that we shall share together. Before going any further suppose you kneel down and tell the Lord that you want to know Him and to explore the wealthy land that is “in Christ,” and ask Him to reveal Himself to your heart. I know He will not turn away from you if you thus seek Him, for He has said “him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (John vi. 37).

\* \* \* \* \*

Now have you done that? Then be ready to come with me to the Antarctic in our next issue, and every time you read of the bitter cold and darkness there, cheer yourself with the thought that “in Christ” there is life and light and comfort and blessing without end.

Now none but Christ can satisfy,

None other Name for me:

There's love, and life, and lasting joy,  
Lord Jesus found in thee.

G. P.

## Four Greatnesses of Divine Revelation

### I

#### THE GREATNESS OF CHRIST AS KING

*Reading: I Chron. xxviii and xxix.*

**T**Hese chapters bring into view something which, in its realization, is the solution to all our problems, the deliverance from all our difficulties. In a word, that something is *spiritual enlargement*. Most of our troubles are due to our smallness. Paul recognised that enlargement was the solution to those very great problems at Corinth. You know what the problems were, the difficulties which confronted him, and at length he gathered all up in one full-hearted outburst—“Our mouth is open unto you, O Corinthians, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own affections. Now for a recompense in like kind . . . be ye also enlarged”

(II Cor. vi. 11-13). That was only an inclusive and comprehensive way of saying, All these things which are such troubles amongst you, such problems, such difficulties, are due to your smallness; if only you were bigger people, so many of these things would disappear altogether; the way out is enlargement! It is true so often that the collapse of things in different realms has been because there was no one big enough to cope with them. If only there had been someone of adequate measure to grapple with it, the situation would have been saved. This is a day when all sorts of maladies are troubling the Church, upsetting Christianity—we need not mention them, we are conscious of them—but they are mainly due to a lack of spiritual greatness, or, to put it again the other way, they are due to pettiness, smallness. The only way out is enlargement, a new horizon, a new sense of the great-



ness of that into which we, as Christians, are brought. But unfortunately to-day, in so many directions, the only bigness amongst Christians is that which is according to the world's standards of bigness, not the Lord's standards.

Now, in these Scriptures, there are four great things. We might call them "The Four Pillars of the Faith," "The Four Greatnesses," and we have covered them all in the two chapters which we have just read; in type and principle, they are there—

The Greatness of Christ, David's greater Son;

The Greatness of the Cross, as suggested by the altar and the immensity of the collective sacrifice;

The Greatness of the Church, the House of God; and

The Greatness of the Word of God, indicated in these chapters at two points; firstly, Solomon's greatness was said to depend entirely upon his faithfulness to the Word of God; and, secondly, David, in committing it all to Solomon, said that he had received it all in writing from the Lord—the word of God governing.

Those are the four great things of the Scriptures.

### The Greatness of Christ

We begin now with the first—the greatness of Christ. He is brought into view by the foreshadowing in Solomon; Solomon, whose name, as you know, was alternatively Jedidiah, Beloved of God (II Sam. xii. 25). How Solomon was chosen is a very remarkable and very wonderful thing. We shall say something about that presently. But you remember the statement made at Solomon's birth. "David comforted Bath-sheba his wife . . . and she bare a son, and he called his name Solomon. And the Lord loved him; and he sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet, and he called his name Jedidiah, for the Lord's sake" (II Sam. xii. 24-25). Just store that up for a little while.

### His Sonship

But as we approach Christ through Solomon, there are several fairly general things which lead us on. Solomon, in the first place, was the one in whom the full thought of kingship according to God's mind is set forth, in principle and type. We know that his reign was the peak of Israel's history. Although David is always referred to as Israel's greatest king, and rightly so, nevertheless Solomon brings out all the glory of David; he is the full, ripe

fruit of David's kingship, and he comes into his place as at the very top of all kingship in Israel, on one spiritual principle, and that principle is sonship. Sonship is the full, ripe fruit of Divine thought. There is no higher thought in the Divine mind, and no possibility greater and higher for any being, than that of sonship in the Divine sense; the calling to sonship is the greatest thing that ever God has extended to anyone. In Christ, sonship is full, and Solomon represents that truth and principle of sonship. "Solomon . . . shall be my son, and I will be his father" (I Chron. xxii. 10). "Of all my sons (for the Lord hath given me many sons), he hath chosen Solomon" (I Chron. xxviii. 5). It is the gathering up of sonship in a full sense and full measure in him; and that is a pointer to Christ. That gives us a very full indication of what kingship is according to the Divine mind; it is sonship.

All that is true of Solomon and recorded of him is just a shadow of what Christ is spiritually, and you begin at the topstone in the fullest sense, the full and the final revelation of God, God's speech. "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son" (Heb. i. 1-2), or, as the literal is, "hath spoken Son-wise." You cannot go further than that. He has reached the end of all parts, and found inclusiveness and finality in His Son. That, then, is why Solomon occupies the place that he does occupy as at the very peak of kingship; it is the principle of sonship embodied. He, then, is the ripe fruit or full expression of the Divine idea—kingship; for kingship is a Divine idea, a thought in the mind of God.

### His Moral and Spiritual Kingship

But now, in relation to what we have just said about sonship, that Divine thought concerning kingship is not just of an office or of a position. Kingship, in God's mind, is a matter of a *kind of person*. Person—yes, but not any person. God does not make anybody a king; it is a *kind of person*. It is moral and spiritual. Those are the factors which support the Divine Throne—moral and spiritual factors, and His king must be the full expression of moral and spiritual features. With God, a king is only a king when he is of kingly character, not because he comes in a line of succession, or on any other ground of choice and selection at all. With God, kingship is kingly character, and Solomon, marvellous to say, in the sovereignty of God is brought to

that place where kingship reaches its full expression, so far as the type is concerned—which, of course, always falls short of reality.

But when you pass from Solomon to Christ, then you have this very thing in pre-eminence. "I have set my king upon my holy hill" (Psa. ii. 6). Why?—because He is kingly. In the fullest, most complete sense, He is the embodiment of all those high thoughts of God, morally and spiritually. When we speak about Jesus Christ as being Lord, when we think of Him in terms of kingship, lordship, rulership, and of His kingdom, we are not thinking of temporal things; we are thinking of spiritual things. He holds His position in virtue of His character, what He is in person; there is none like Him. In His essential qualities, He is that.

### **Satan's Counterfeit**

But then note another thing. Here is this Divine thought, this Divine idea, about kingship, which is, in such a full way, represented by Solomon; but where you have a Divine thought, carrying a Divine intention, you will always have another, something which is intended to take its place. So you have to go back in the history of Israel in the matter of kingship and you find the Divine thought subverted. The first of the line of actual, temporal kings was Saul, and Saul was not God's thought, but the embodiment of man's thought. At a point when the spiritual life of Israel was very low, when spiritual matters were not dominant, Satan found his opportunity, as he always does when the spiritual life gets low. He rushed in, took advantage of the spiritual condition, and suggested the idea of kingship: suggested it to men of low and poor spirituality: which meant that, not having God's thoughts and God's mind, not being men of the Spirit, they accepted the suggestion, and found a king after their own mind and thus precipitated this matter, forestalled God's thought, and pushed Saul in. Do you notice how that has happened again and again—a Divine thought carrying a Divine intention, and then the enemy seeking to forestall, and putting in something on the same principle, but of a different kind? It happened, or nearly happened, with Solomon himself. Solomon was chosen, and David had given his word about Solomon; then Adonijah, his brother, worked subtly, and gathered leaders around him and made a feast, and was proclaimed king, to carry away the throne from Solomon. Thank God, it did not work, but you can see what took place, how exactly in keeping this is with something that commonly happens. It

is going to happen in the supreme way. God is about to bring in, finally and fully, His king, His Son, and Satan will have Antichrist, the embodiment of all human thoughts about kingship, pushed to the fore to try and anticipate God.

But let us note that, not only in these great ways, but in every way, a low state of spiritual life is always Satan's opportunity for giving something on a Divine principle, but which is itself false. The only safety is in a fulness of spiritual life. That is what came out in Solomon—safety when things were at fulness in Israel. There was no chance for anything else to come in. Safety is not along the line of suspicion, watching like dogs for every bit of heresy, seeing whether things are sound. Safety is in the absolute lordship of Jesus Christ, and all that that means. If the people of God get there, they need not worry about the success of these other things at all. I said at the beginning that there are all kinds of maladies afflicting the Church which are due to this smallness of spiritual life, and these maladies are suspicions, prejudices, fears, all this which is going about which is deadening and crippling and paralyzing the life of the Church. If we were only in the full flood of spiritual life and all that Christ in His place means, we would be delivered from all these things and getting on with the work of building the House, instead of being all the time taken up with—Is this quite safe, quite sound? Well, Saul was the embodiment of man's idea, not God's, and he was the attempted forestalling of that Divine thought, as Antichrist will be; but it is doomed, as are all man's ideas when they get in the way of God's—ultimately, they are doomed.

### **Sovereign Grace**

One further thing about Solomon. He came to his place and he held his place by Divine sovereignty because he was beloved of God. Those two things must always be kept together. Sovereignty, yes, but because beloved of God. There is the mystery of Solomon's birth. We know who Bath-sheba was, we know what happened, the tragedy and the breakdown in relation to Solomon's birth, and if you begin to ask questions you get into difficulties; but you have to see a sovereignty at work behind this. And, while we do not link that with the Lord Jesus, there is a line, even in His case, which carries this wonderful principle. It is sovereign grace. Oh, if anybody is the embodiment of sovereign grace in full expression, it is Solomon. Do you remember the genealogy of the Lord Jesus at the opening of the

Gospels? Do you remember some people mentioned in it? Rahab the harlot—and Christ came of her; and Ruth the Moabitess. You say that these are dark steps leading up to Christ. Are they? It depends on how you look at it. They lead right up to Him Who is the embodiment of sovereign grace—that is all you have to say about it. Grace to Rahab! Ought Rahab to be in the Divine line? Ought Ruth, the Moabitess, concerning whose people and nation the word had been uttered “A Moabite shall not enter into the assembly of the Lord; even to the tenth generation shall none belonging to them enter into the assembly of the Lord for ever” (Deut. xxiii. 3)—ought she to be here? What has gone wrong? Oh, grace has triumphed over law!—that is all. “Where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly” (Rom. v. 20), and in Christ you have that gathered up. And, mark you, it was at that place where in type He had fulfilled all the work of grace for us in death, burial and resurrection—at Jordan—that the heavens were cleft, and the voice was heard “This is my beloved Son” (Matt. iii. 17); Beloved of God. On the other hand, belovedness is all on the ground of grace. “He hath made us accepted in the beloved” (Eph. i. 6). “Who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love” (Col. i. 13). So Solomon has his place in sovereignty—yes, but because he is beloved of the Lord. Of course, I am not touching upon the Divine rights of the Lord Jesus as equal with God, His rights to reign, to be Lord, on that basis; for what I see is that the Bible is not, in the first place, occupied with what God and Christ are in Themselves, outside of this universe, remote from us. The Bible is concerned with how They have come into our life, our world, and the ground upon which They have adopted this world, this creation—and that is grace. And sonship, so far as the New Testament is concerned, is always linked with Divine grace; redemption, reconciliation, justification, that is where you find sonship. It is a spiritual, not an official matter, through the grace of God.

Why did God act so lavishly, unrestrainedly, with Solomon? You read the whole story of Solomon. It takes a lot of room in Samuel, Kings and Chronicles, far more than I shall be able to give you as a background even for what I have to say, but it seems, as you read, that the Lord was just falling over Himself where Solomon was concerned to lavish good things upon him—give, give, give! The Lord gave

to Solomon riches and honour (II Chron. i. 12). The Lord, it seems, found no restraint whatever in just letting go to Solomon. Why? Because He was seeing through Solomon to One Whom He intended Solomon to represent as fully as ever one can be a representation of the Lord Jesus. God was saying, in effect, If we are going to have a representation of the real thing, we will have a real representation, we will do it thoroughly. He went as far as He could go with a man who was not His Son in reality in this spiritual sense, because He saw the Other all the time.

My dear friends, does not that come right back to us with this, that a true apprehension and appreciation of the Lord Jesus is the way right into the countenance of God? Do you want spiritual fulness? Do you want to know all this wealth of which we shall speak as possessed by, and given to, Solomon? Do you want to know where God’s smile can rest upon you, and He be without restraint in your spiritual enlargement? How can it be? Not by straining nor searching nor any kind of inward scrutiny, struggle, or effort, but by appreciating His Son rightly, being occupied with Christ, seeing and apprehending God’s Son in reality by the Holy Spirit. That is the way. The way to walk in the light of the Divine countenance where God can give to you, and lead and teach, and enrich and enlarge you, is an adequate apprehension of the Lord Jesus. Occupation with Him—that is the way; and the strain goes out. You notice when Solomon was in his place, in those days there was rest round about (I Kings iv. 24); the land had rest, the people had rest, they found rest unto their souls. It is just like that when the Lord Jesus has His place and we, by the Spirit, are seeing Him; the strain goes out, rest enters in, the inward civil war stops. Yes, it is all bound up with God’s Son having His full place, and our being occupied with Him, seeing Him by the Spirit.

Now, for the present, we are going to leave it there. This is the greatness of Christ—only a glimpse, a fragment, but oh, it is so true that, if conditions spiritually are to be in the Church again what they were typically in Israel in the days of Solomon, we shall have to get away from the littleness of our apprehension of truth and have a great enlargement of heart. May the Lord grant us eyes to see a larger Christ than ever we had imagined, and a larger Cross, and a larger Church, and a larger Word of God.

T.A.S.



## The Basis of True Heart Fellowship with the Lord

*Reading: John xi. 40-46; xii. 1-8; xiii. 1-15;  
Matt. xxvi. 6-13.*

**T**HE thought that is chiefly with me is the utter contrast between these two suppers in John xii. and John xiii.—both of them in private homes and limited to a select circle, but completely different in their atmosphere and proceedings. The Lord was central in both, but the circumstances leading up to them were entirely different in the two cases.

### No Real Fellowship Apart From the Cross

Let us take the second first and recall the circumstances out of which it arose, and seek to get the atmosphere of that time. Our Lord and His disciples for some months had been travelling towards Jerusalem, and the record of that last journey is a fascinating story. As they journeyed from Caesarea Philippi throughout the length of Palestine, the Lord with His face set steadfastly as a flint to go up to Jerusalem knowing that there He would meet His doom as a man, on no less than three occasions He drew that little band of disciples around Himself and told them in the plainest possible language what was going to befall Him when they arrived. There was something about the Lord in those days that was very striking and rather awe-inspiring. In one of the passages we read that Jesus went on ahead and the disciples followed Him awe-struck, fearful (Mark x. 32). But although He had told them what was ahead, they did not believe nor understand. He was seeking to get them into real heart fellowship with Himself—a fellowship not only of the understanding, but of the heart. He wanted them to know what was to befall Him, and He wanted them to be quiet and calm in fellowship with Himself and to understand that He was going through death to resurrection and ascension, and that all the Divine purpose for which He had come to earth would be fulfilled through His Cross. But they did not understand one little bit. Their minds were obsessed with other thoughts. They thought of Him as 'the King Who was about to set up His Kingdom in manifest power. They were looking for some spectacular manifestation of His Messiahship, some outward thing. He all the time was after an inward state; He was seeking to get them into the good of the Kingdom in their hearts.

One of the great lessons for us to learn from that journey to Jerusalem, and their failure to come really into fellowship with the Lord, is

that a terrible obstruction is placed in the pathway of spiritual progress if our minds are obsessed with preconceived ideas which make it impossible for us to receive the truth. It was so in the case of these disciples. So we find them on the way, with the Lord a little withdrawn from them, conversing among themselves and saying, Who shall be greatest in the Kingdom? Instead of being in fellowship with the Lord, walking with Him and ministering to Him, they were actually arguing among themselves as to which should have pre-eminence when the Kingdom was set up. There was an atmosphere among them which was very distressing, so that when they arrived at Jerusalem and the Lord would celebrate the Passover Feast with them, He had to minister to them, and before they could sit down at the Supper He had to cleanse them from the defilement of the journey. He had to do for them what they were not willing to do for one another because of the unrest of their hearts and the atmosphere that had been generated by their discussion.

We have that wonderful scene of untold grace: the Lord Himself taking a towel, girding Himself and washing their feet. What was that for? Just to set them an example? Ah no! It was to remove all defilement—not only of the dusty highway, but the spiritual defilement that had come in—to bring them into fellowship with Himself, to make them able to hear what He had to say. There was a measure of fellowship, but it was very small. The Lord loved them. I think that is a wonderful word—"He loved them unto the end," to the uttermost. Despite their failure to enter into fellowship with Himself, despite all that was wrong with them, He poured His love upon them. The Lord does not deal with us as we deal with one another. We are out of harmony with Him; He ministers to us and seeks to bring us into fellowship and communion and understanding with Himself. I suggest to you that the act of our Lord in washing their feet that night changed the whole spiritual atmosphere and brought them into harmony and fellowship with Himself and with one another. And yet the measure of fellowship was severely limited.

### Understanding of the Cross is a Heart Matter

But let us now note the very different atmosphere of the supper at Bethany as recorded in Chapter xii. In the house of Simon the



leper were gathered that little group—Lazarus, Mary and Martha, with the disciples; but the disciples were onlookers. Although they sat down at the supper table, they were not really in the spirit of what was happening there. The little group at Bethany had invited the Lord into that house. They were making Him a supper. He was the centre, He was their all-absorbing occupation. Their purpose was to fellowship with Him and pour out their love before Him and unto Him.

Lazarus, who had been raised from the dead, and who always stands for the resurrection man, was sitting at meat with the Lord.

“And Martha served.” That is a very precious fragment. Martha always stands for the spirit of service, but there is such a difference between her service in the house of Simon the leper and that which she rendered earlier in her own home when she was cumbered about much serving (Luke x. 38-42). All the fret, the irritation, the care, the anxiety, had gone and she served now in a spirit of beautiful fellowship.

And Mary was there, who had on the previous occasion sat at the Lord's feet and heard His word, but now brings that alabaster box of ointment, pouring out the ointment upon the head of our Lord so that the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.

That is the scene. But what is the explanation of it? What is there to account for the complete difference in understanding fellowship with the Lord between those three who lived at Bethany and His disciples? By what road did they come to understand the Lord? because that lies behind the whole story. It was not only that their hearts were loving, but their eyes had been enlightened. They had come to know the Lord, and to understand that He was going to the Cross, and through the Cross to resurrection. They knew that in a few days He would be crucified, and that He would rise again; and Mary, who had been keeping that vase of very precious ointment for the anointing of His Body at His death, now poured it on His head as an act of loving worship, knowing that it would never be needed for the embalming of His body. He was going through death to resurrection. Our Lord must have found the fellowship of that little group in Bethany very, very precious to His own heart, for remember He was a man with keen human sympathies and sufferings, and He had come from that journey with great distress of spirit because of the lack of fellowship with those who loved Him and whom He loved. But here, in the little Bethany group, He found what He failed to find among His

twelve disciples. He found those who were in fellowship with Himself, who understood Him and knew what was facing Him, and were in the good spiritually of the fact that He was the resurrection and the life. They had come, through the school of acute suffering, to see and to know what He was.

#### Understanding of the Cross Comes from Experience of its Operation

The whole story of John xi. is fascinating and full of instruction for us: the Lord standing back from them in their hour of need, allowing things to take their course and come to the very uttermost of human tragedy, and then coming on the scene when their hearts were broken, when everything in life had turned to dust and ashes, their home in ruins, their loved one gone beyond all hope of recall. The point of the tragedy from their standpoint was this, that the Lord could have prevented it. “If thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” It was true. They had sent for Him and He had not come, and He did not give any explanation. The Lord never does explain His reasons. He said, “Said I not unto thee, that, if thou believedst, thou shouldest see the glory of God?” And they saw the glory of God. “This sickness is not unto death,” the Lord had said, “but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby.” The end was not death; just as for Him the end was not death on the Cross but resurrection, ascension and glory. When they heard that voice of command, “Lazarus, come forth!” and saw their brother come forth from the grave, it was not only, or even chiefly, that their human circumstances were changed and that tragedy had been turned to triumph, but they had come to see the Lord, to understand Him, and the full implications of His word had broken upon their wondering and worshipping spirits—“I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die.” They knew what He meant then; they had come to know Him.

I want to say very simply that it is the way in which we do come to know the Lord. As He allows us to go through the difficulties of life, as the tragedies and the sufferings of life come to us, we bring our requests for deliverance to the Lord, and so often He stands back and does not seem to answer us. Often He allows us to go through the depths of suffering and seems to withdraw Himself—and we know He could deliver. We know that by a word He could change the whole situation, yet

He does not; and how often our hearts have been wrung not merely because we are suffering, but by the agony of the thought that we are suffering, as it seems to us, unnecessarily. It does not seem there can be any good result from the course things have taken. It seems to us as we go through that it is all so useless. Instead of being life, it seems to be death; instead of being light, it seems to be darkness. The Lord allows it—that is the heart of the problem. One word from Him and the whole thing would be changed, but He does not speak the word. One touch of life from Him and death would flee, but He does not give that touch and we are left to go through. But it is in the going through we learn what the Lord is, we come to understand Him, we are brought first of all into a knowledge of Him and then into fellowship with Him. There is no other way. If there were an easier way, the Lord would take it, He would deliver us; but it is the only way by which we can come into that fellowship with Him in which He is for us not only our Saviour and our Lord, but our very life. We live by Him and we learn what He is, not only as our deliverer, but as the centre of all God's purposes and the One in Whom everything is to be fulfilled, first of all in our experiences and then in the larger realm.

### **The Fragrance of a Life that Expresses the Cross**

As we come thus to an understanding of Him and to a fellowship with Him, we are in the place where we can minister to Him and bring Him the costly offerings. We can bring Him the love that is born in our hearts in the depths of trial. We can bring Him the appreciation and the knowledge of Himself to which we have come in the school of discipline and suffering; and there is a fragrance. The disciples brought no fragrance to the supper in John xiii. But in John xii., when Mary broke the box the whole house was filled with the odour of the ointment. How beautiful!

There is a fragrance about the life that has gone through the discipline of suffering and come to know the Lord in trial, a fragrance which is very wonderful and very beautiful and that cannot be imitated. A life that has gone through with God and has come out in victory and into a beautiful and understanding fellowship with the Lord cannot be defined, analysed, classified, described; but the house is filled with the odour of the ointment. There is something indescribable and indestructible about such a life which is not only precious to us but to the Lord also.

### **The Lord's Delight in True Fellowship with His Own**

I close by saying this—the Lord gets something out of our sufferings, as we come to know Him and to fellowship with Him in the deep places of experience, that is very precious to His heart. "They made him a supper there." I am perfectly sure they went away from that supper refreshed and happy, but I am equally sure that the Lord Himself was strengthened for the conflict and greatly cheered in His heart, because, despite the difficulty He was having with His disciples, there was a little group representative of the Church who had come through to understanding and were in fellowship with Him.

Of course, you know that Lazarus, Martha and Mary were not at the tomb on the resurrection morning. They did not help to bring spices to embalm His body. Where were they? I think they were waiting quietly at home for the news of His resurrection. They knew He was a triumphant Lord, they knew He was the resurrection and the life. The disciples were in despair when what the Lord had said came to pass. All their hopes were gone. Never was there a more tragic group on earth than those disciples when the Lord was crucified. But complete calm reigned at Bethany. The little home there was quite undisturbed by the news of the crucifixion. They had already come through in spirit to resurrection.

And we can go through life's deepest tragedies and sufferings undismayed, undisturbed, if we have come to know what the Lord is in His own Person, to know Him as the resurrection and the life. Let us be those who minister to the Lord, who refresh His heart, who make Him a supper continually.

S. A.

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## “The Fruit of Conflict”

*“Out of the spoil won in battles did they dedicate to repair the house of the Lord” (1 Chron. xxvi. 27). The margin gives a slight variation—“Out of the battles and the spoil did they dedicate to repair the house of the Lord.”*

**T**HE emphasis for this moment is not so much upon the battles as upon the one word here which is translated “repair.” The word really means to strengthen, to make sound, to consolidate. There are battles connected with the building—we know something about that—but here they are not particularly related to the original building. When the building is done, it needs preserving, it needs its original splendour maintained, its first glory kept; there needs to be something that can maintain it according to God’s first thought in it; and if this word is to be taken as it stands—repair, maintain, preserve, strengthen, consolidate (the Authorised Version does translate it “maintain”)—then it is something which has to go on after the work of building. It looks like a reserve that they had against the building falling into disrepair. I think it is just there that the force of the whole verse rests. “Out of the battles and the spoil” or, if you prefer it, “Out of the spoil won in battles did they dedicate to maintain the house of the Lord.”

### Conflict Allowed by Divine Sovereignty

Well, the message in that is, I think, very apparent. It lies right on the surface. Divine wisdom working sovereignly *allows* conflicts as a way to keep things strong, pure and healthy. Battles seem to be necessities for the very purity of that which the Lord is seeking to have. Conflicts, in the Divine judgment, are essential to maintenance. We do not always look upon them like that; indeed, it is very often difficult so to regard the terrific conflicts into which the Lord’s people individually and collectively are so frequently thrown. We know something about the conflicts. It is not necessary for me to tell you that there are such things. We know that they are increasing in their intensity, and sometimes they get almost, if not altogether, beyond our powers of endurance. It seems there is very little “let-up” in the number of battles that have to be fought. It is in the plural here—“Out of the battles . . .” You and I know a good deal about the battles, the real spiritual

battles, the enemy coming in like a flood, the fury of the oppressor, the constant effort on his part to break and to destroy us. Our question often is as to why the Lord allows it. We are hardly out of one before we are in another; and there is no doubt about it, the Lord allows it. It may be that there are some things which could be cut short and put back, but on the whole, the Lord allows His people to know very much conflict and pressure; and as we enquire why, this little fragment does give us at least a part of the answer. When we examine the history of things, we can see it is quite true that any increase, any preservation, any maintaining, has come along the line of what we have gained from our deep experiences.

What the Church has secured by way of conflict, trial, pressure and adversity! If this were a literal building around which we could walk at the end of our days, we should be able to see quite a lot in it which we could relate to a definite experience of conflict and trial through which we went, and we could say, That came out of so-and-so, that was the result of that particular bad time that I had. Spiritually, it is like that. Even now we can see in our lives something like that, and it will be so at the end. If we use our imagination, the truth holds good (if it is not actually like this) that the Lord will be able to take us round His completed work and say, Do you see this and this? Do you remember what you went through? That is the result from it, the value of it, that is the good that came out of it. It was all built into the fabric, the great eternal edifice of God’s own house. It was something secured through battles; it was the spoil that went to the house; it recovered something that was lost of original glory, purity, fulness. It safeguarded some breakdown. The Lord put you through something, and out of that He secured what was necessary to guard against a threatened loss of which He was aware.

### The Enemy Used as God’s Instrument

We will not let our imagination carry us too far, but we could take the enemy round and let him have a look at the result of his onslaughts—not to his great gratification. You see what you did! You meant it to destroy; it has worked the other way. Does this mean, then, that when the Lord is alive to some threatened loss or failure, some need for a



strengthening, a repairing, a recovering, when He sees that things are weakening, crumbling, He lets the enemy in and allows him to make an onslaught? Does it mean that? It has proved like that. You can find much of it in the New Testament. It was not only connected with the securing of the house, with the winning of a way for the building of the churches and the Church, that there was conflict. But so often, after the Lord had established a church, the saints in it went through great conflicts, and you find that it was in that way that things were kept pure. We cannot keep the Lord's things pure by sound doctrine alone. A lot of people think we can—that we are bound to have a pure thing according to God's original thought if we have the doctrine right. It does not work out like that. It does not mean that the doctrine is a matter of little concern—of course, it must be right and sound—but there is something more than sound doctrine needed to keep things straight. You will never keep things wholly in a spiritual way according to God's mind by having only a perfect technique and perfectly orthodox teaching. They are kept living and pure only as we go through the fires with them, as we know the conflict which is associated with these things. Every bit of truth which we receive, if we receive it livingly, will take us into conflict and will be established through conflict. It will be worthless until there has been a battle over it. Take any position the Lord calls you to take, and, if you are taking it with Him, you are going through things in it, and there will be an element added by reason of the battle. You have taken a position—yes; but you have not *really* got it yet, the real value of it has not been proved. You have not come into the real significance of it until there has been some sore conflict in relation to it. The enemy assails you. But, you say, where is Divine sovereignty at work? Can the enemy do just as he likes? No, he cannot. The Lord has allowed the assault, knowing quite well that

by so doing you are going to get something as a result which you never would have got by just taking the position mechanically. It has to come to you, not technically, but spiritually. Out of the battles some extra factor will come. Do you not think that that is precisely the meaning of the Apostle's words, "We are more than conquerors . . ." (Rom. viii. 37)? The Lord does not allow battles just to bring us to victory, simply to have a fight in order to win. To be more than conquerors means that there ought to be something out of the fight that is more than just being where you were before, a maintaining of your position; something out of it—the spoil of battle. You have not only beaten your foe, you have taken something from him of extra value.

That leads to another thought. Has the enemy got things which are of value to the Lord? Can he really yield values to what is of God which are only secured through this conflict? Well, it is true; he has much, very much, which, wrested from him, can beautify the house of the Lord and strengthen that which the enemy meant to destroy.

Well, it is out of the battles and the conflict that there is that dedicated to repair, strengthen, maintain, keep pure and healthy, the house of the Lord; and we have to seek this grace that, when we pass into conflict over some position we have taken in obedience to the Lord, some line that we are following which we know to be the Lord's way for us, and we find ourselves thrown into the vortex of a terrible conflict, we may remember that it is not loss that lies in that direction at all. It is something extra, it is spoil from the battle; the conflict is going to yield something for the house of the Lord. If we can only believe that and accept the pressure and the trial in that light! The Lord give us strength so to take hold of the conflict in faith that we really do believe that there is something coming out of it which is more than there was before, something very much for the Lord.

T. A-S.

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Assistant Editor: G. PATERSON

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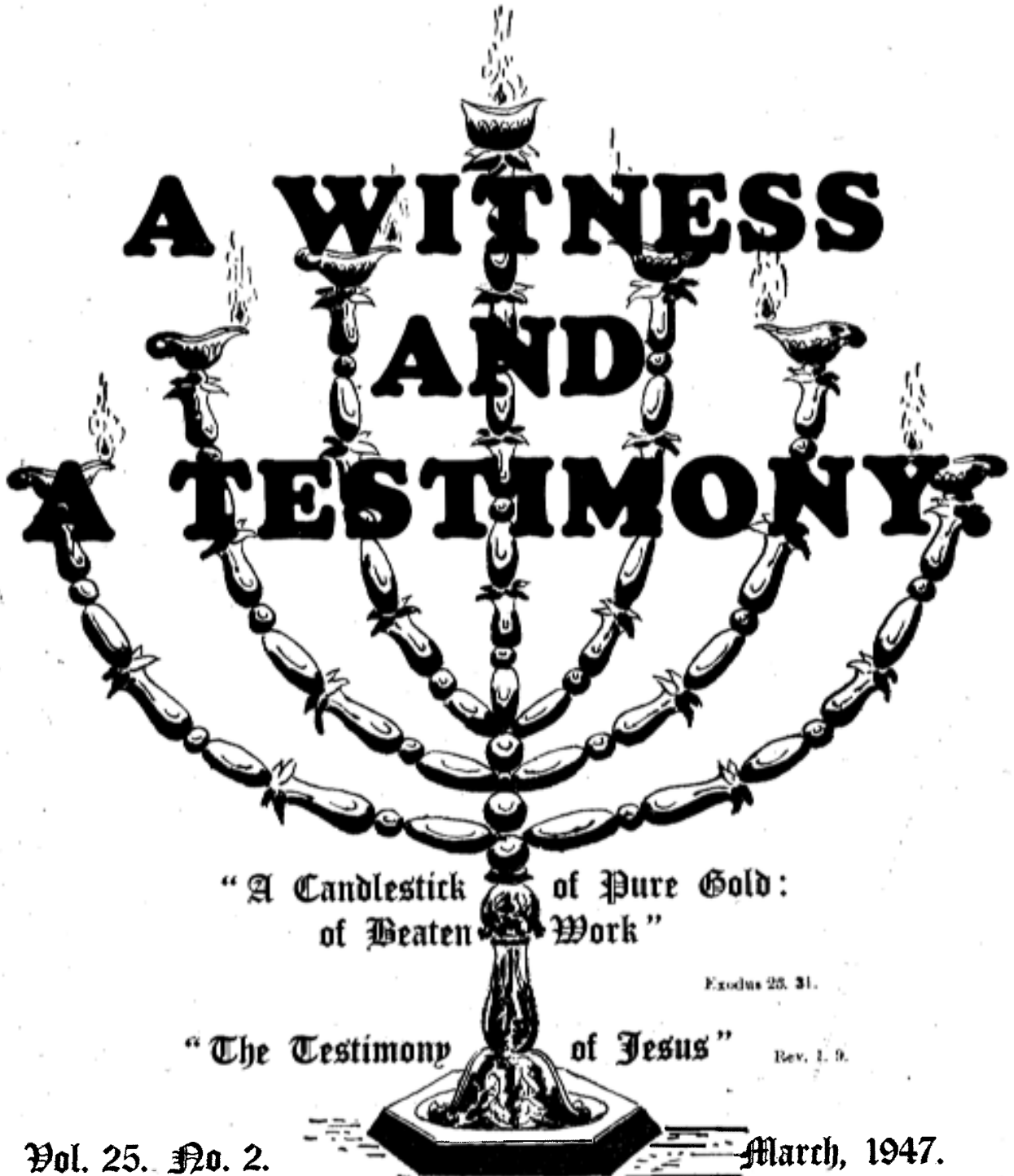
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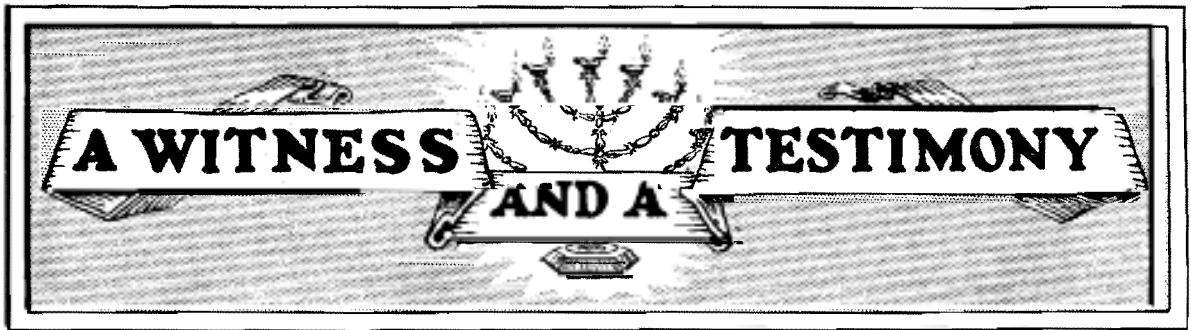
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## The Meaning of Christ

V.

### CHRIST CRUCIFIED

**W**HEN we were thinking about this matter in its wider range of the second man, the last Adam, our key phrase from Scripture was I. Cor. xv. 45—"The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit." Then we proceeded to be occupied with the uniqueness of the Son of Man. We added to that II. Cor. v. 16—"Wherefore we henceforth know no man after the flesh: even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know him so no more"—implying that Christ has to be known in another way than after the flesh.

Now we move on to the third phase, and we add another well-known passage from I. Cor. ii. 1, 2:—

*"And I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the mystery of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."*

The meaning of Christ?—Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

#### The Undercutting of a False Man

Although we have not, by a very great way, covered the meaning, for ourselves individually and for the Church, of His incarnation and earthly life, we have to move on and come anew to the meaning of Christ in the terms of His Cross—again something far beyond the possibility of our compassing within a short time, and of necessity to be looked at perhaps in only one particular; and that is, that the Cross of our Lord Jesus was the

undercutting of a false man to make way for a true man. We have seen how that true man was brought in, and there is so very much more contained in those statements of His which, on the face of them, seem so simple and commonplace. "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John xiv. 6)—that comprehends everything for the new creation. The central word alone—"I am the truth"—quite clearly indicates that the truth is a Person, and not a system of teaching, not a philosophy; it is a Person. In other words, the Lord Jesus was saying, I am the true Man according to God's mind; all other men now are false to the Divine thought, a contradiction; there is one great, corporate, false man here; I am the truth as to God's idea about man, and I am the first of a great, comprehensive, corporate, true man, the one new man.

The true Man according to God's thought and intention was brought in in incarnation; He had grown up and lived His life by the Spirit; He had been tested, and through testing had been perfected; and then had been attested, and then placed, established, in heaven—there as the firstborn among many brethren, the standard and type and pattern to which the Spirit sent would work in a multitude of men. But, before that could be done, something had to take place to dispose of the false man, and so at a certain clearly defined point a new phase of His life was taken up—the phase of the Cross. That point is clearly discernible. Everything before had moved steadily up to one climax, and that was the climax of the transfiguration; the Man brought in, tested, perfected, and attested as seen in

the Mount of Transfiguration. So far as He Himself was concerned, it finished on the Mount of Transfiguration. He is glorified, He is attested from heaven, He is clothed with heavenly glory; for Himself there is nothing whatever to stand between Him and entrance triumphantly into heaven; but He turns and comes down the Mount, and takes up this further phase of His meaning in relation to the false man, the man who is in a place from which he has to be removed to make room for the new corporate true man. Thus He descends and from that time He moves toward that point where He stands as the representative of the false man. On one side of His Cross, it is that. (There is another side, where He is offering Himself without spot unto God. There are two sides to the Cross.) But on this one side, He Who knew no sin was made sin in our stead that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (II. Cor. v. 21). How utter that statement is! It goes deeper than any other statement about the Cross. You have the statement that He "bare our sins in his body upon the tree" (I. Pet. ii. 24), but here it is more utter than that—He is made sin in our stead, meaning that we are sin: we not only have sins but we are sin: and He is made sin in our place (not inherently but representatively). The other half of the statement bears that out in its own way—"that we might become the righteousness of God in him"; not that we might receive as upon us the righteousness of God, but that we might *become* the righteousness of God in Him. He is the righteousness of God, but not only as a virtue, as a characteristic, He *is* the righteousness of God. "That we might become the righteousness of God in him"—that is the statement, an utter statement. He was made sin for us. He therefore stands in His Cross as *representing* the false man, and comes under the stroke of Divine judgment, dismissal, cancellation: He is put away. If we want to see and know what God's attitude is toward ourselves and this creation ultimately if we are not found in Christ, listen—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mark xv. 34.)

That is God's attitude toward us ultimately, outside of Christ. Now, thank God, it is the day of grace, and He is waiting, giving us a chance; but that is the actual and positive destiny of all those who have been in the way of being saved, and have refused, have not acted upon their opportunity; it is their destiny to know what He knew in that awful moment, the most awful moment in the history of any man—God forsaking him. You may have intellectual problems and difficulties

about eternity and eternal punishment, but do not try to resolve that into human understanding, even by using human language of age and ages and eternal ages—no human language can convey that. Taste God-forsakenness, and though it be, in time, but for an instant, it will grey you like an old man, it will put years upon you, it will be like an awful eternity. Lose God for an instant, and it is an awful thing. Well, in that moment, He stood in the place that we shall occupy if we are not found in Him. In order that we might not be in that position, the grace of God in Jesus Christ is available to save us from it. But the point is, He was swallowing up the destiny of the false man, swallowing it up in His own person to get that man out of the way, to make room for a man who would never know that at all. Oh, thank God we in Christ inherit the countenance of God for ever—no face turned away from any child of God abiding in Christ, because it was turned away from Him for that awful, that eternal, moment.

### A Threefold Sequence in Experience

But we must keep closely to the specific thing we have in view. He has entered upon this new phase, taken up in His Cross the representation of the false man. While this is a clearly denned new phase, it is, after all, but the climax of underlying purpose, for this has been underlying the whole course of things—especially from that day when He came to the river Jordan to be baptized of John. All that was crowded into the three and a half final years of His life here was with the Cross underlying it. At His baptism He definitely and deliberately, in a figurative way, accepted the Cross, made the Cross the basis and background of everything to follow. There are two high peaks in the three and a half years with a deep valley between. The first is His baptism and the open heaven, and, looking across the valley, the second is the transfiguration. Those two things are joined and are in sequence. The baptism in figure is the Cross; the transfiguration, the glory that should follow. Between those two lies the deep valley of the temptation, immediately brought in after the baptism; the testing which, while it had a particular and peculiar form and inclusiveness at the end of those forty days in the wilderness, went on for the whole three and a half years in many other forms. The end of that valley is on the next high peak of transfiguration. I want you to see the sequence in those things; baptism, temptation, transfiguration. First the acceptance of the Cross; then the bringing home of what that acceptance meant continually through a lifetime, the

working in of the Cross in principle, coming to know what He had accepted in a very practical way along a thousand lines; issuing in a glorious triumph so far as He personally was concerned, and heaven attesting Him as triumphant.

Now He is actually going to the Cross to make all that good for us, and possible of transmission to us; to bring us to the acceptance of the Cross; then through the working out of the Cross, unto that triumphant issue in glory. You see, this last phase is not for Himself, it is for us, every part of it. That threefold sequence is now taken up in the Cross to be made good for others, for His Church, for the one corporate new man. So we are immediately brought to the Cross of our Lord Jesus on one principle. It is the principle that came in to govern when He went to Jordan—that we, after nature, after our Adam relationship and life, are altogether put out. From the Jordan onward, in the more specific and positive way, with Him everything was—the Father. “Not my will, but thine” (Luke xxii. 42). “I delight to do thy will” (Psa. xl. 8). Everything was referred to the Father, and Satan’s effort all the way through those long three and a half years was to get Him in some way to act on His own ground, His own choice, according to His own judgment, after His own feelings: to allow Himself to direct and govern His procedure, His activities: to do it of Himself independently, out from Himself; and the one persistent attitude and determination of the Lord Jesus through the whole course was to refer everything to the Father, and to defer to the Father about everything. The governing thing was—“My Father”; it was “Father, Father,” all the way through.

### “No longer I, but Christ”

Now that is taken up for us in this way, that it is “no longer I, but Christ.” I have been to Jordan, I have been to the Cross, I have been crucified, I have been put into a grave and have been dismissed, I have been ruled out, I have been cancelled, I am something not acceptable to God, I am false. It can only be Christ now; all must be referred to Him. In every thing, whether I understand or not, whether it is painful or otherwise, I must refer it to Him, I must defer to Him, I must judge nothing of myself, decide nothing myself, I must not come into the picture at all independently. It must be Christ, only Christ. That is the meaning of the Cross. I have gone out and He has come in—the new Man. I am on other ground, altogether other ground, and that Cross is the

great divide. It stands there to say “Finish” to a false man, and to bring in another. I am not going now to begin to analyse the old and the new man. I am simply stating facts. In His Cross the Lord Jesus has undercut a false man and ruled him out. We are that; dear friends, we are false, we are not the true thing that God meant when He made man. We are different, we are other, Satan has interfered and made man altogether other than God intended, and man is a false thing. But Satan is seeking to keep and preserve and propagate and maintain and minister to a false humanity. God has closed the door, in the Cross, upon us. Oh, that even Christians recognised this more! Here is the realm for our repentance—not only of our sinful life of the past, and our sins, whatever they may be: vices and evils and so on: but repentance that *we* have come in at all, that we have allowed so much of ourselves to come in, even for God. We cannot fail to be impressed with this, that inside of the whole system of Christianity the old man is sporting himself; he is making a name for himself, getting a reputation, gratifying himself, using the very service of God to bring himself into the limelight, to express himself, to realise himself; and that is the reason for the lost impact. “Can Satan cast out Satan?” (Mark iii. 23). Can the old man cure the old man? Can the false make the false true? No! We have to get out of the way. We are getting in the way all the time. We are meeting the old man so much in one another. We see it, it almost obsesses us, we know it about ourselves. It is something about which we must continually repent, something we must continually repudiate, and ask the Lord to deal with in the power of the Cross—more and more to dismiss that which He has dismissed, to make good the mighty dismissal when He turned His face away, and said in effect, You are dismissed, I have done with you, you no longer stand before My face. Now, that refers not to a gross, vicious sinner, but to a man, a kind of humanity which has to go in order to make room for this other Man.

Why? While that is, in a sense, the negative side, it is very positive in its working, and we have stayed long with it because that is the realm of all Christian experience, right through the Christian life; it explains what the Lord is doing with us, and why He deals with us as He does. He is getting rid of us; He got rid of us, and He is getting rid of us. He is working out the riddance of this rubbish. The more we know of ourselves, the more we agree that it is rubbish; the more the Lord lets us see ourselves, the more we agree that the



best thing is for us to be got rid of, and very often we would get rid of ourselves in the light of it. But, thank God, He has done this in the representative and inclusive Person of the Son of Man, and now He is working it out. We can trust Him to work it out. Do not put your hands on other people and try and work out their death—the Lord will do it. Do not put your hands on yourself and try to work out your own death; hand yourself over to the Lord, He will do it.

### **The Reproduction of Christ through Death and Resurrection**

But as He does it, there is the other side. As the one is removed, the other comes in. The movement goes on in even balance, making room for the true man, for Christ. He went to the Cross to get us out of the way representatively and inclusively in Himself, but He also went there in order to make possible a reproduction of Himself as He was truly; not as He was made in that moment—sin: but as He was truly in Himself. I am not talking about His Deity; please leave that out of the question. I am talking about the Son of Man. He went to the Cross in order to make possible a reproduction of Himself as He was as Son of Man, and reproduction remains inseparably upon the ground of the undercutting of the false man and the installing of the true. In other words, it remains upon the ground of death on the one side, and resurrection on the other. There has to be the continuous working of His death in us to get rid of that which is false and can never satisfy God or be used by God, that there may be a continuous working of resurrection to bring in more and more of Himself. It is the way of the Lord's reproducing of Himself. We know that from the law of the grain of wheat—"Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit" (John xii. 24). But this for-us is a thing which has repeated crises. I do not want to dishearten or discourage you, but I must say this, that these crises do not become less acute: they become deeper and deeper as we go on. Sometimes we think that we have touched bottom, and that we can never go lower, but we have lived to prove that we can go deeper yet, that there really is no bottom to this thing so far as this life is concerned. Well, do not lose heart about that statement. I am trying to say this, that the Lord is out to bring in His Christ in ever-growing fulness, and in order to do that, room has to be made for Him by getting rid of the fallen man which is in His place. The meaning of Christ is that, for one thing—

reproduction. What is the most reproductive vessel and instrument of the Lord, reproductive of Christ? It is the most crucified vessel or instrument, the most dead to the old man, to the life of nature: that which has had taken from it its own competence in the most utter way, which has been brought most completely to the place where it has nothing in itself but everything in Him. That is the most reproductive vessel; and do remember that the Lord is after a reproductive vessel. "It is not good that the man should be alone" said the Lord about the first Adam, and He says the same about the last Adam. So God made the woman, and she was called Eve—"because she was the mother of all living" (Gen. iii. 20). But that was within the limited realm of a certain life which was not eternal life, for they had not partaken of the Tree of Life to live for ever. Christ is the last Adam; the Church, *His* Eve, having taken of the Tree of Life, is His vessel of reproduction, and she comes in by way of the Cross. It is after Calvary that the Church comes in and becomes the Jerusalem which is above, which is the mother of us all (Gal. iv. 26), the vessel through which Christ reproduces Himself. But my point is this, that the Church which is really going to reproduce Christ is the Church which has been to the Cross, has come out of the Cross, and is continually coming out of the Cross. This is only saying in other words that the law of enlargement is the law of death and resurrection continually operating. Oh, do we not know it in our own personal experience? It is true that any additional measure that we have of the Lord has come ever and always by some deeper experience and working out of our own undoing, our own dismissal.

And what is true of the individual will be true of any local company. It is possible for a local company to be put again and again ever more deeply into His death, and, as it is so, to be enlarged with spiritual measure, and with Divine reproductiveness. Oh, that the whole Church were conformed to that law! What a different situation there would be to-day. In the beginning it was a crucified Church, and it rapidly multiplied, reproduced.

### **The Reproductive Vessel**

#### **(a) Corporate, Not Individual**

Now, this introduces something perhaps beyond what we ought even to touch now, but let me hint this to you. This is why everything in the New Testament was upon a Body basis. By this I mean a Church basis. Nothing was individualistic, nothing merely personal; all was corporate, on a Body basis.

Even Paul, the great Apostle, foreknown and chosen before his birth (Gal. i. 15) for his great ministry and having it announced to him right out of heaven by the glorified Lord Himself, has to be brought into the Church and to move out to that great work on Church ground, on Body ground, and everything has to be held on that basis. Why?—because it is the Church that is the Eve of Christ, the mother, the vessel through which Christ reproduces, and it is the Church which is born out of His death in His resurrection. You see a governing law, you have the clue to the increase, the enlargement that took place at the beginning. It was on that basis then; and the multiplication took place and the reproduction went on marvellously then because it was a well-crucified Church, and a well-resurrected Church in Christ, and it was moving on that basis all the time. Now, perhaps that is a little beyond what we ought to touch now, but it is worth noting.

### (b) Organic, Not Organized

Let us come to the simple principle itself. Christ went to the Cross to dismiss the false man, to undercut him, to get him out of the way. We are that. Christ, when He died, not only took our sins and not only took us as sinners, as we would regard ourselves, but He took us *as people* to the Cross. We are so mixed up and tangled, that you cannot separate between us and our sins, you cannot get in between something called "us" and our sinfulness, and separate the two. It is necessary to get rid of the lot and bring in another man, and Christ is that other. God is working on

that principle all the time. He is not trying—He never does try—to make us something new in ourselves, and by ourselves apart. His method is to bring Christ into us, and build up Christ in us; and as Christ is built up, we go out, because we have gone out in the thought of God. That is God's intention, made so clear—that Christ is to be all and in all. Do you want your life to be fruitful? You will have to die, you will have to know the Cross ever deepening in its work. That is the way of fruitfulness. It is a painful way, but we can reproduce only after our kind. Christ has to reproduce after His kind. He will do it and He will do it through the Church. I see a lot more than I am trying to say about the place of Eve taken by the Church as Christ's vessel to reproduce Himself. One thing that I wish you could see is this, that the Lord's method of reproducing is not by machinery and organisation, but by a living Body which knows in a living way death and resurrection. Any kind of institution that has not been born out of a death in which the stricture of God against the flesh and the old nature has been registered is not going to reproduce after Christ's order. It may grow, it may get a great many adherents, it may become a great multitude, but it is something of the old creation, it cannot stand before God. It is "this great Babylon which I have built"; I am going to violate grammar and say, which "I" has built, and it will not stand. Babylon the Great will fall, but the new Jerusalem will rise at the fall of Babylon.

T.A.S.

## "Casting Down Imaginations"

*Reading: Deut. xii. 1-4, 32.*

**I**N reading through the first twelve chapters of the book of Deuteronomy and seeking to get to the heart of the instruction contained in them, I am impressed by two notes which find frequent expression and which seem to gather up all else. They are summarised in these two fragments from the twelfth chapter.

One note is this—that when the people of Israel entered the land, they were to break down, to dash in pieces, to hew down, to burn, the idols of the nations that held the land before them. And this is said more than once in language which is suggestive of the greatest energy and purposefulness.

The second note is this—that they were to obey the Lord precisely and to do exactly as He commanded. In other words, they were to be governed in everything by His words and

thoughts, no matter what they themselves might think or desire. This second emphasis is the complement of the first.

Idols were, and are, representations of human ideas of God, and set forth man's imagination as to what God is like—human thoughts about God, and, because human, necessarily false and linked with the whole system of wickedness that lies behind fallen man. The interpretation of our first note of emphasis therefore is this: When the people of God come to the land of promise—that is, when they really enter into a knowledge and experience of Christ on the basis of the Cross inwardly known as a subjective power—then the imperative requirement is that they shall strike down and hew in pieces those conceptions of God which they and all other men have received in a natural way and which are utterly false.

Let us remind ourselves of the word of the Lord in Isaiah lv. 8, 9:—

“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.”

Human thoughts about God. The matter touches us all intimately in our everyday lives. Why is God doing this with me? Why is He not intervening in that other situation? Why is He not exercising His power and delivering from such and such a burden? Why does the Lord send His servants into this hostile world and allow them to suffer at the hands of evil men and be thrust hither and thither and driven like a leaf before the wind? Oh, how prone we are to allow our thoughts to come into operation and to put question marks against what the Lord is doing! What a factory for the making of idols the human brain is!

But here is the emphasis of these opening chapters of Deuteronomy. When we come into Christ, really into the land, where something of the sovereignty of the Lord, the government of the Spirit and the work of the Cross in us is really entered into and we begin to know it, then let us take care that above everything else we slay, break down, cast to the earth these human ideas about the Lord. His thoughts are not ours and our ways are not His. We must allow Him, as Lord, liberty to do things in His own way, however perplexing, difficult, and wrong it all seems from our standpoint. Though we may seem to be at the mercy of the world, and driven to and fro, faith must ever hold fast to this fact—that the thoughts of the Lord about our progress as His witnesses may be very different from ours, and we must beware, and take heed to break down all idols. The energy in the words on this matter in Deuteronomy is most striking, and if we are really going to be strong in our testimony for the Lord there must be corresponding energy in our attitude. We must refuse to allow any such thought to govern us as, for example, that the Lord has forgotten us. “Hath God forgotten to be gracious?” That is an idolatrous idea to be broken down with energy. Of course He has not! Oh, the Lordship of the Lord is our sheet anchor! The Lord *is* Lord, and if any doubts or questions arise in us because of the seeming contradiction in circumstances, they must be energetically dealt with and not for one moment allowed any place. Cast down the human thoughts to the ground and hew them in pieces!

In Deut. xii. 10, 11 we read:

“When ye . . . dwell in the land which the Lord your God causeth you to inherit . . . then it shall come to pass that to the place which the Lord your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there, thither shall ye bring all that I command you”

What is in view in that twelfth chapter is the bringing into expression of the Lord’s full pattern. In the seventh chapter, which is so much like the twelfth in some respects, the word which seems to stand out is this—

“Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God; the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him” (v. 9).

Taking the two chapters together, we can relate the two thoughts—the faithfulness of the Lord working out to the realization of His full purpose. Whatever the Lord allows or causes to be done, however contradictory it seems, by virtue of His sovereignty in every realm it is in point of fact an expression of His faithfulness. And more than that, it is a movement toward the accomplishment of His full thought and purpose in His people. Both facts are at times difficult to believe, if we judge by the things seen. So often the Lord’s interests seem to be jeopardised, and not prospered, by what is happening, and we instinctively ask how can such things be for the building up of the saints? How can the removal of a servant of the Lord from a sphere where he seems so necessary be for the advancement of the Lord’s interests? Well, do we believe the Lord is Lord and that He is faithful both to His servants and to His purpose? Then we must conclude that these strange developments are with a view to the more speedy and satisfactory fulfilment of the whole purpose of God, and are an expression of His faithfulness in keeping His covenant.

The thought to be emphasized is that we need Divine energy to take our stand in this matter and to refuse to allow any of the idols of human creation, human thoughts about the Lord, to hold any place. We must hew them down. Can we apply that to our personal problems and bring it right into the realm of actual situations in our lives? This is the way to rest, but it demands the exercise of real energy of faith to effect it. The idols of nature must be ruthlessly destroyed—and the Lord will give strength for the task. “The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds; casting down imaginations . . .” (II Cor. x, 4,5). “As for God, his way is



perfect." Every thought to the contrary is an idol to be destroyed.

The Lord strengthen our hearts not to look

at the things that are before our face, but to look off unto Him Who is upon the Throne, crowned with glory and honour!

G. P.

## "He That is Spiritual"

### II.

#### Spiritual Warfare

"Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (John xii. 31).

"I will no more speak much with you, for the prince of the world cometh: and he hath nothing in me" (John xiv. 30).

"Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might. . . . For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. vi. 10, 12).

"And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels going forth to war with the dragon; and the dragon warred and his angels; and they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil, and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world; he was cast down to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him. And I heard a great voice in heaven, saying, Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accuseth them before our God day and night. And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not their life even unto death. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and ye that dwell in them" (Rev. xii. 7-12).

OUR occupation is with the content and outworking of a little fragment from I Cor. ii—"He that is spiritual." We were occupied earlier with the centre of that so far as we individually are concerned, that is, the reconstituting of believers on a spiritual principle and basis. We were really turned in on ourselves—always a difficult and sometimes a dangerous thing. But we were seeing the nature of the new creation in Christ as being solely spiritual, and our great governing statement which covers all that we have to say was, and is, that spirituality is the key to everything that is of God; and that begins with a spiritual state or a new spiritual being, brought into life by new birth. We worked that out at considerable length. What follows

now is an outcome of it. We are going to turn from the inward and individual, right out to the circumference of it.

#### Two Creations under Rival Authorities

The Scriptures we have read touch the realm in which we are going to move. It is the circumference of spirituality. The great all-encompassing facts are these. Firstly, there are two creations active, an old and a new, which represent two kinds of man: what the New Testament calls the soul-man and the spirit- (or spiritual) man. "Now the soul-man"—that is the literal meaning of the phrase translated "natural man" in I Cor. ii. 14—"Now the soul-man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." "The soul-man"; compare this with "he that is spiritual" in verse 15. What is in view is a likeness after which the being is constituted. You know the meaning of "ikon" (Gr. *eikon*). An ikon is an image, a likeness, a figure; and here in the New Testament we have three Greek words derived from *eikon*. The word is changed to *ikos*, which implies "to take the likeness of." So you get this word *psukikos*, which means soul-likeness, after the likeness of the soul. That is what is referred to here in I Cor. ii. "Now the man of soul, the soul-man," the man who is constituted soul-wise, "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." That is the man to which I Cor. xv. 45 refers. "The first man Adam was made a living soul," the *psukikos* man. Then there is another word—*sarkikos* (*Sarx* means flesh). That is the man who is constituted wholly on the principle of the flesh. But then there is this other word so often used—*pneumatikos*; and he is the man whose likeness is of the spirit, the spiritual man. It is to him that such passages refer as "He that is spiritual": "The last Adam a life-giving spirit." Just that by the way.

To get down to this matter of two orders, the *psukikos* and the *pneumatikos* orders, or the soul-order and the spirit-order. These are the characteristics or natures of two creations, the old creation, and the new creation in Christ Jesus. We are saying, then, that there are two creations, representing two orders of man, active, and very active. Of course, you know that in yourself personally that is true. There is an active old creation order or soul life.

You know also that, if you are a born-again child of God, there is another Man in you active, and these two do not get on well together, and that is largely the root and cause of all your trouble. But in the wider realm, this is true of the whole two worlds.

The second thing is that, over those two creations, there are two lords. There is the one of whom we have read, the prince of this world, the great ruler of this world-darkness with his hosts, his hordes of evil spirits—Satan, the Dragon, the Devil, and his angels. They are there over the old creation and governing it. On the other side, there is the Lord Jesus Who is Lord of the new creation.

### Two Realms in Conflict

Thirdly, although we do not always feel it to be so inside of ourselves, there is nevertheless from God's standpoint and in God's mind an absolute divide between these two. They are split apart by nothing less than the Cross of Christ, and that Cross is immense. It puts things in two entirely separate realms. Later we shall come to see the working of that, but just for the moment I anticipate by reminding you of the object that the Apostle Paul had in view when writing to the Corinthians. At the beginning of his first letter he said "And I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom . . . for I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (ii. 1-2). The object which he had in view in that deliberate determination was to put two worlds asunder in Corinth. They had come too near and were interfering with each other, and everything was upset because of the overlapping of those two worlds—the realm of the natural (you see how much Paul says about it) and the realm of the spiritual. We never get anywhere until this mix-up has been put right. So he said in effect, I determined to put the Cross right in there between these two things and split them asunder, put them apart. The Cross makes the great divide between these two creations, these two natures, soul and spirit.

Now another thing—and this is where we get very near to the point of our present meditation—the medium used by the prince of this world in the old creation is the soul of man; that is his line of action, his basis of operation. On the other hand, the means, the basis, the instrument of the Lord Jesus in the new creation is the spirit of man—of course, renewed in new birth, quickened and raised and joined with the Lord one spirit, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Man's spirit is the vessel of His activities. So you find that there is a continual

conflict between soul and spirit in the individual; but also in the larger world, the whole world, it is like that.

### Satan Always Works through the Soul

All Satanic activities are soul-wise. That is a key which will unlock a vast realm of things, if only you get it into your hands spiritually. Satan's activities are all soul-wise. He assailed the soul of man in the beginning. You know what the soul is—mind, heart, will: reason, emotion and volition. Satan came arguing and reached man's mind; he came appealing and seduced his heart; he came driving and forced his will. So he got that creation soul-wise into his hands, and ever since then all his activities have been soul-wise. He is a spirit, an evil spirit, but he works soul-wise. This whole world is run by Satan on the psychological basis; it is all psychology. We have had perhaps the greatest exhibition ever given to this world of that fact during the recent years. More than anything else, it has been a psychological warfare. But we have seen through the psychology so much that is absolutely Satanic. You may call it a "war of nerves." What is that but a psychological war? But so it is apart from wars; this world is run on the psychological basis. Everything commercial is psychological; so are all the secrets of good business. You will never have any success in business if you do not know the psychological moment and the psychological method, and all that. All the secrets of good teaching lie there—in your psychological acumen to know the psychology of the child. This world is all on that level.

But let us come to this. Have you not recognised that the activities of the Devil are always like this—in some way to stir up the soul? When there is some interest of the Lord in view—a conference is coming, or something which has spiritual values wrapped up in it—have you not found again and again that, in advance of it, there is a drive made on your soul to provoke you, to get you bad-tempered, to do anything to get your soul stirred up? You know when that has happened you are out of position, you have to get quiet with the Lord and get the seething inside calmed down. It is extraordinary how it happens; it comes from nowhere; very often there is no explanation. You take on provocations that do not exist, interpret looks and words in a manner never intended; there are phantoms about all the time stirring up your soul. So often it is not coming from anything at all that you can trace—it is not anybody, it is nothing said—but somehow your soul is getting worked up and you are being put out of spiritual position;

the seething of your soul like a ferment overflows your spirit and destroys its poise and strength and grip. Sometimes the method used is to depress. You feel terribly depressed. You cannot explain it, but something has happened in the atmosphere and registered upon you, depressing your spirit. Yes, all the Lord's people have known that. David knew a lot about it. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him" (Psa. xlii. 5). Sometimes you have to talk to your soul like that. You know the depression of the soul to take your strength away, to sap and drain your spiritual vitality. Sometimes the method is to bring the soul into darkness. What onslaughts the Devil made on Martin Luther along that line, to bring into the darkness of accusation and condemnation, where his assurance of justification and salvation was undermined and weakened! Many of the Lord's people know a lot about that, the darkness, the overclouding, when it seems that the soul is in a dark dungeon.

Sometimes the means is to inflate the soul, and, oh, what a lot of success the Devil has gained along that line. Nebuchadnezzar was the very embodiment of this whole principle of soul life. "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built?" (Daniel iv. 30). That is the spirit of Antichrist inflating the soul. The word of the Lord is, "If a man thinketh himself to be something when he is nothing" (he really is, from God's standpoint, nothing) "he deceiveth himself" (Gal. vi. 3). How many people there are deceived along that line of self-importance! You know what this world is like in this matter. But the tragedy is that the very realm of the things of God, the work of God, has become the playground for that sort of thing, people exhibiting their own self-importance, and bringing themselves into prominence—all the expression of an inflated soul life. You find absolutely nothing of that in the Lord Jesus when He was here, but the exact opposite. "I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matt. xi. 29). "He poured out his soul unto death" (Isa. liii. 12).

Well, there are many other ways in which the enemy works soul-wise. Sometimes he seeks to affright. How often he has tried to get us frightened, as he did in the days of Nehemiah—and in the days of Hezekiah, when Sennacherib came and started his demonstration around Jerusalem.

### The Answer to Satan through the Spirit

On the other hand, all Christ's activities are spirit-wise, and there you open up another whole realm of Scriptures; e.g., "born of the

Spirit" (John iii. 8); "renewed in the spirit . . ." (Eph. v. 23); "strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man" (Eph. iii. 16); and—touching spiritual understanding—"the eyes of your heart enlightened" (Eph. i. 18). So you bring in the Scriptures, all bearing upon this spirit-wise activity of Christ. And this quickened, renewed, energised, indwelt spirit, is up against this soul of ours, and this soul world.

When we speak of spiritual warfare, let us not think in terms of the abstract. "They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb." What do you take that to mean?—that they were a people of a phraseology about the Blood, and they started hurling their phraseology at the Devil? Well, phraseology, even about the Blood, has no effect on him. "They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb." Whom did they overcome?—the Accuser of the brethren, who accused them day and night. How do you overcome an accuser? Only by having a better case than he has. You have to have a good case, and the Blood of the Lamb represents that in a mighty way. Our legal standing because of the Blood of the Lamb puts the enemy out of court if only faith will hold to it. And we must not think in geographical terms of Satan being cast down from somewhere high up and coming crashing to the earth. This is *spiritual* warfare. We have to get this spiritual sense and idea of things. Our soulical mentality is always drawing pictures of places, positions, spaces, but we have to understand that this is a spiritual matter—that Satan can, in effect, be cast from the highest heights to the lowest depths without any geographical factor coming in at all. You may have a person against you who lays a charge at your door, and thinks he has a very strong case. But you happen to have a case which undercuts that and tears it to pieces, and he goes down before you in utter collapse; he comes from a tremendous soul height to a very great depth. That is not a geographical thing but a spiritual. This is spiritual warfare, not geographical. "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood" (Eph. vi. 12), it is not in the realm of the physical and geographical at all. It is spiritual—you can call it moral if you like—and the Blood represents a legal case, and Satan can be cast down from heaven countless times in one day. You cannot do that literally: it can only be understood spiritually. A million people all over this earth may cast him down in one day at different moments of the day. As they stand by faith on the case that the Blood provides, they have a mighty and triumphant answer. That is how spirituality



works out in warfare. Christ works spirit-wise. Soul cannot cast out soul, and the soul cannot cast out the Devil because the Devil has already got it in his hand. Satan has obtained ground in our souls, but in our renewed, born-again spirits he has no place. The evil spirit behind everything can only be overcome by a spirit strengthened with might by the Spirit of God, and that means by a subduing of the soul to the spirit.

### **The Subjecting of the Soul to the Spirit**

Now we have touched a new aspect. The Lord spoke figuratively when He said that we should take up our cross and deny ourselves; and later He went further with that in a little fuller explanation when He said "Whosoever would save his soul"—that is the word there—"shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his soul for my sake, the same shall save it" (Luke ix. 24). The whole soul life, the whole natural life of ours, has got to be brought into subjection to our renewed spirit before the enemy can be cast out. If we are actuated by natural, soulical interests, we have no power over the Devil; he has ground. It is only when our reasoning and desiring and feeling and willing have been brought into subjection to the Spirit of Christ in our spirit as something inside of us, by our own determined and deliberate choice, that the enemy can be defeated. The enemy can make havoc in a life that is lived on the soul level, as he did at Corinth—even though it be the life of a believer. The degree in which our natural life influences us is the degree in which we are powerless over the enemy, and, let me repeat, it is in that realm that things matter. The real issue of life is in the spiritual realm. Our accountability, our worth, our value, is measured by the degree in which we count there. It matters not what we are here in this natural world. We may be important people here naturally but we do not count for anything really beyond a few passing years, and then it is *Sic transit gloria mundi*—so passes the glory of the world. It is how much we count in things spiritual that is our real value.

### **Spiritual Ascendancy Demands Faith**

Now, let me say further and again, things that are seen, things that happen, are not alone, they have spiritual factors behind them. Oh, young people, try to get hold of this. Ask the Lord to help you to get this really registered in your hearts, not as a part of your religious education or information, but really as a working principle in your lives. Your difficult situations, hold-ups, frustrations—they are not just alone by themselves. If you are a child of God, there is a spiritual factor

and a spiritual intelligence behind, and you will never get through until you can get behind the thing and deal with that spiritual factor; until you know how to deal with the enemy, the things will not be loosened. The Lord's answer to these challenges may not always be in the same way, but always on one certain principle. Paul said, "I would have you know that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel" (Phil. i. 12). That is one way in which the Lord answers the enemy—He sovereignly turns the work of the Devil to His own glory and to the fulfilment of the very thing which the Devil intended to prevent. The Lord's answer is not always in the direct way of casting out the Devil, nor a direct rebuke that brings the enemy's work to nought or stops him from working. The Lord very often allows him to work but answers him in many ways, and the ultimate issue is with the Lord, not the Devil. But always the Lord works to one principle, and that is the principle of our faith. Paul met the situation; he saw and felt the things that were happening. Do you think that in his heart he capitulated to Satan and said, The Devil has things in his own hand, it is of no use our trying to do anything? Not a bit! Paul's attitude was—the Devil sees we are having some success and he is working; he is apparently doing a lot of harm, but the issue of this thing will be with the Lord and not with the Devil. So, because of an attitude taken like that on the part of His servant, the Lord was constantly, in different ways, answering the Devil and getting the issue into His own hands. But the instrument of the Lord in defeating and casting down the Devil was the spirit of the servant of God standing strongly—and you do marvel how strongly Paul's spirit stood. Though Satan often seemed to have things his way, in the end the Lord triumphed every time.

### **Spiritual Ascendancy Through Discipline**

We have spoken of our feeling of grief over the lost impact of the Gospel, and of the Church, and of Christian life generally; but where does impact begin? It does not really begin upon men, nor upon things, nor upon the world. Impact really begins upon the spiritual forces behind, and if you have not the spiritual strength, all your assaults and all your endeavours will be in vain. Are you in the Lord's work? Unless you can get behind people and things to the spiritual factors and forces, you may as well close down. You are not, in the long run, going to have much to show for all your labours. You are dealing ultimately with spiritual things. If you are going into the work of the Lord, remember

you cannot get this equipment by mere Bible study or by any kind of soul-training. You can only get this along the line of the discipline of the soul and the strengthening of spirit, and that is why there should be a predominant element of practical life in all training for the Lord's work. For instance, to know how to live triumphantly in spirit with difficult people. You will never go out to meet the power of the enemy behind this world unless you have learned how to meet him in your own spirit and under discipline. So the Lord puts us through a severe gruelling before He really commits to our hands spiritual responsibility.

Let me say at once that the soul is not to be annihilated. We are not wrong in having

souls; our souls have to be won, to be mastered and brought into charge of the spirit so that the self-element is eliminated and the soul serves the spirit and serves the Lord, and not ourselves.

You see the nature of spiritual warfare; you see the realm in which things matter most. Well, this takes us back to our earlier message—the reconstituting of us and the building of us up in an inward way, the increase of spiritual measure. May the Lord use this meditation to secure for Himself the instrument that He needs for casting out the prince of this world, for establishing and extending His true spiritual kingdom and reign.

T.A.S.

## The Fellowship of the Spirit

*Reading: Phil. ii. 1-11.*

**T**HE "fellowship of the Spirit"—that is one of a number of holy experiences which form the basis of the Apostle's appeal, but it is something more than that. The fellowship of the Spirit is one of the most vital concerns of the people of God. The Holy Spirit's presence among us and in us is to be on the basis of fellowship, sharing a common life.

Now, we are accustomed to think of the Holy Spirit in more personal and individual terms. Quite rightly, we think of Him as the power for service—and God knows how much we need that power; or as the Spirit of wisdom upon Whom we are so dependent for our knowledge of the will and way of God; or of the sanctifying Spirit through Whom alone we can live holy lives. All these are aspects of the Spirit's working, and true aspects, which we need in a personal way.

### God's Purpose in the Gift of the Spirit

But the weakness of the people of God generally is a failure to get beyond such personal experiences of the Holy Spirit; whereas the true nature of this most wonderful gift to the Church is that He forms the living basis of relationship with the exalted Christ. There is not only the possession of the Spirit but fellowship with Christ in the Spirit. Moreover, He forms the basis of our corporate life together—the fellowship of the Spirit. So that the great purpose in God's heart concerning us in our experience of the Holy Spirit is to constitute a full corporate expression of the exalted, enthroned Christ. This is a realm into which very many Christians have not, at any rate consciously, entered. Praise God for

knowledge of the Holy Spirit as the power for service, and so on, in individual lives; but the great purpose of God in this age is that there should be among His people a fellowship, *the* fellowship of the Holy Spirit—which is something far more, far greater, than any individual experience of the Holy Spirit, however great—and which constitutes the full expression of the fact that Jesus Christ is Lord of all. We all need a clearer understanding, and then a deeper experience, of what God is after, of what *God* means by the fact that on the Day of Pentecost the risen Christ poured forth His Spirit. Thank God for every partial experience of that, but there is a full purpose in the heart of God bound up with the gift of the Spirit which is hardly realised by the people of God of our day, or perhaps, of any.

### The Spirit's Goal—the Enthroning of Christ

Now we look at the Lord Jesus as so marvelously depicted in these few skilful, descriptive lines. We look at Him as the One in Whom the Spirit came in fulness. Every feature of the life of the Lord Jesus from His conception and birth here to His being carried up to glory was done in the power of the eternal Spirit. Jesus Christ was the Spirit-filled Man. Oh yes, we say, of course He was! Look at the power of His utterances, the might of His miracles, the wonderful, sensational things that He did! Well, that was the Spirit truly, but if a Spirit-filled life is nothing more than that, then you may write the biography of Jesus Christ as you would that of any other spiritual man, you may look on a life that is finished—thanking God, perhaps, for the fragrant influence that still continues—but that is all. But can you write the

biography of Jesus Christ? Of course you cannot!

But here we have another side of this same Spirit-filled life—He emptied Himself. Note the terms used—“humbled,” “a servant,” “obedient,” “the Cross.” You say, I thought He was full of the Spirit. Those two things go together—“full of the Spirit” and “emptied Himself.” What was the Spirit doing as He led Jesus Christ to the Cross? He was leading Him to the Throne. What was the purpose of God in this life that was led on by the Spirit in this way of suffering and to death? It was that He should be highly exalted and given the Name which is above every name. And so the Spirit’s purpose in Jesus Christ was fully realised, not in these more outward, passing expressions of power in His ministry, though they were of the Spirit, but when, by way of the Cross, He was carried to the Throne and received from the Father authority for a universal kingdom.

#### **The Church the Vessel to Express the Enthroned Christ**

Now we follow on. There is a sense in which we go the way the Master went: ours is the path of the Cross, which will culminate in the glory. But it is equally true that we begin at the point to which the Lord Jesus attained. That was where the Church began, that was the commencement of the Spirit’s presence in the Church. Jesus Christ had been placed on the right hand of the Majesty on high, to be God’s king upon His holy hill, and on the basis of that fact the Spirit came to the Church. And why did He come?—to express among men in a corporate way, as He could not do in an individual life, this blessed and wonderful truth that God’s Son is exalted in the Throne; and when people—needy or evil people—men or devils, met that early Church, they did not only meet individual men full of the power of the Holy Ghost, they met Jesus Christ, the risen Lord. They took knowledge of these men that “they had been with Jesus” (Acts iv. 13), and in those early days that is what the power and presence of the Spirit meant in the Church. Jesus Christ had not gone away, had not been got rid of; He was here, and was here in power and great glory.

#### **Fellowship in the Church is by Way of the Cross**

You remember what is recorded in Acts i. 6-8. The disciples asked, “Dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” and the Lord Jesus said, “It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within His own authority. But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon

you”; or, “ye shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you.” In other words, I think this is what the Lord meant—The kingdom is a far bigger thing than the kingdom coming to Israel—that is but one aspect of a far bigger issue; and the kingdom will be expressed when you are filled with the Holy Ghost. If I am right in saying that, then it is a great pity that a whole line of teaching has developed among the people of God making a hard and fast division between the Church and the kingdom. The Church is the full spiritual expression of the kingdom and the King. “Ye shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you”; and then and there the fact that God had given to His Son a Name above every name, the fact of Christ exalted and upon the Throne, was not only the subject matter of their preaching but it was the message of their very life together. They lived it, and the power of it was known as they dwelt in fellowship with Him; for we do not possess the Spirit apart from Jesus Christ—we possess the Spirit in the measure in which we have fellowship with Him; and, as bound up with that, we know the Spirit in the measure in which we have fellowship with one another. Was it not true in those early days that they were united in a bond of fellowship on the basis of that of which we have read in the case of our Lord Jesus?—for these are the principles of this kingdom. He emptied Himself. That is why they had fellowship together, that is why they were a Spirit-filled Church; they had emptied themselves. “Not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own” (Acts iv. 32). When we come truly into the spiritual edifice of the Church, we leave everything personal outside; as the Lord Jesus, coming into this world, left everything personal which related to His own position, His own standing, reputation and glory. He left them, He did not hold to them, He emptied Himself.

Another word used of Him is “servant.” They too were servants—not only of Jesus Christ, but of one another. Another word used, and one which to us so often sounds harsh, is the word “obedient.” “He became obedient”; and so did they to one another. The primal glory and power of that early Church consisted in this, that not only were there a number of men who by virtue of their own personal relationship with the risen Christ were filled with the Holy Ghost, but they had been melted together in the love of God and lived together in blessed harmony, in spite of what they were naturally and in spite of everything that tended to divide them; in that mea-



sure the kingdom of God was expressed.

### **Relatedness Must Have Practical Expression**

Now, in Paul's day and when he wrote to the Philippians, things were otherwise. Oh, men were preaching Christ, they were true to the fundamentals of the Gospel, they were out for souls; and shall we not say in some measure they knew the power of the Holy Ghost? But that is not all and it is not enough. The Apostle Paul thanked God for it, and for everyone who was preaching Christ, and for everyone who was walking with the Lord and seeking to serve Him; but he had been shown the true purpose of God in the coming of the Holy Spirit—not that a number of men should do good service for the Lord and then go to glory, but that there should be constituted a corporate vessel which truly expressed the enthroned Christ by their relatedness together and their relatedness to Him. Alas, the Apostle Paul had to say of these very men—"all seek their own" (Phil. ii. 21). How subtle the Devil is! He will even let us be busy in the Lord's service, out-and-out for Him, preaching Christ, and yet missing this essential and full purpose of God which demands the laying aside of everything which is just our own, and involves the discipline and the suffering and, if necessary, the agony, of living together, serving together, in the fellowship of the Spirit. Paul felt in his day that that fellowship was disappearing. They had not known about it in theory in the early days, there was no Apostle Paul to explain it to them; but they had lived it, it was there. The bulk of God's dear people to-day do not know about it. Alas, on the other hand, there may be some of us who do know about it but do not live it. Well, the Lord wants us to know about it and to live it, for it means everything to Him.

This is not merely a matter of time, this is an eternal thing. This corporate expression of the enthroned Christ in the power of the Holy Ghost is God's provision for His universe for eternity as well as for time; and that is what He is waiting for, that is the pivotal point of the coming of the Lord—not that Christ should be constituted King—He *is* King—but that by the Holy Spirit a people should be fitted together, as well as related to Him, in such a way as to make them ready to share the kingdom with Him.

"The fellowship of the Spirit"—there are so many practical issues that arise from this. I want first of all to beseech you to pray about the facts as I have tried to present them to you very simply—that this is the great, fundamental vocation and destiny of the Church.

Let me say again, it is not merely fellowship in being together and trying to serve the Lord, or the fellowship that we enjoy in one another's company. It is a life union of relatedness which gives the Holy Spirit opportunity to express in living power the fact of the exalted Christ. What a calling!—but it is ours.

### **The Need to Watch Fellowship**

Well, the Devil set to work very quickly in those early days to break it up by bringing in division, by encouraging people to seek their own—for instance, that they resented any suggestion that they ought to yield obedience one to another. They resented the position of the Apostle Paul. They were servants of the Lord as he was a servant of the Lord. Let him serve the Lord his way; they would serve the Lord their way. The Devil was doing just what he wanted—breaking up this unity of life which so expressed the Lord. In blessed contrast to this, the Apostle was able to write of Timothy—"As a child serveth a father, so he served with me . . ." (Phil. ii. 22). There is something of the reflection of the great Son serving His Father in humility and obedience, a readiness, a right relationship; and that being found in Philippi or anywhere else is an occasion for the Holy Spirit to give His attestation that Christ is Lord of all. What a need, then, to watch fellowship, for Satan has a thousand subtle ways of breaking it up. Two sisters can be both eagerly serving the Lord, and yet be at variance with one another, as they were there (Phil. iv. 2). Men can be out and out for the Lord, but in an individual way. You can write their biography at the end—for that is the end—a life of comparative usefulness, but finished when they finish. But in the measure in which we are together in the fellowship of the Spirit, we are in an eternal kingdom, as eternal as Christ Who is exalted to the Throne on High. We need to watch fellowship.

### **The Need to Cultivate Fellowship**

Then we need to cultivate fellowship. But we must guard against the dissipation of real spiritual values by a mistaken conception of what is meant by that. It is right that we should seek fellowship with all who are true to the Lord; but in so doing we must not neglect the practical expression of relatedness of life which ought to be found in the company of those to whom the Lord has specially joined us. It may be less costly to go here and there enjoying fellowship with others rather than being found in our place at the local prayer gathering, carrying responsibility there for the Lord's worldwide interests. But He sets great value upon the local corporate

expressions of His Church and we need to see that the fellowship of the Spirit is being developed along that line and that we are making our due contribution. Some of us may be neglecting this side of things. If we are, let us ask ourselves whether we are really knowing the Kingdom of God in power—for that is not a personal matter; that is expressed in the Church. Others of us may perhaps be losing our keen appreciation of the need for, and value of, standing closely together in the Lord. All such tendency results in weakness. Our business is to see that it is not yielded to: to cultivate fellowship: wherever we are and wherever we go, to have this impressed upon our spirits in a way in which it can never be removed—that God's purpose in giving the Spirit in this dispensation is not merely to have Spirit-filled individuals but to express in the

Church the glories of His Spirit-filled Son. That is God's purpose—a purpose, as I say, ignored by so many; and that is where we come in—to pray, to labour, it may be to preach, that this revelation may be conveyed. It is a sacred trust. If the Lord has revealed it to us in any measure, we have it on trust that it should be revealed to His people. That is our ministry—let us give ourselves to it. Oh, let us realise that though Satan cannot pull down the Lord Jesus Christ out of the Throne he can challenge the fact and weaken the impact of that kingdom, he can perhaps postpone its manifestation in us, through us; for everything depends upon the entering into, and the maintenance of, the fellowship of the Spirit.

H.F.

## Four Greatnesses of Divine Revelation

### II.

#### THE GREATNESS OF CHRIST IN HIS POSSESSIONS

*Reading: 1 Kings x.*

**I**N what we have just read, Solomon sets forth the greatness of Christ in three respects—his riches, his food and his wisdom. Again we are brought back to this governing consideration—why all this detail, this elaboration? Why all this space in the three books—Samuel, Kings and Chronicles—occupied with setting out in a very minute and thorough way the greatness of Solomon, and especially in these three directions? There is a double answer. The first part is that which we have already suggested—that he was sovereignly chosen to bring into view Divine thoughts concerning the greater Son of David, and the real meaning of sonship according to God's heart. The second is not another, but only a part of the first; it is that the purpose was to bring the glory of God into view: in other words; to glorify God.

#### His Riches. (a) To Display the Glory of God

You remember how David led up to this. He gathered together all the wealth, the gold for the things of gold, the silver for the things of silver, the metals and the precious stones, and then added his own great treasure—and great treasure it was—and passed it over to the Lord for His house. (I. Chron. xxviii and xxix). It is a great description; it is very full, almost overwhelming. But then David suddenly seems to collapse before it all; as you read you feel something of an anti-climax.

After having risen in eloquence about the dedicating of it all to the Lord, the joy in doing it, suddenly, in another voice, soft, hushed, subdued, he says, But, after all, what have we done? Of Thine own have we given Thee. After all, it is all Thine own; it is not our wealth, it is Thine. "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine." After all, it is the Lord's glory, not ours. And David passed that all on to Solomon his son; the son took it all up and brought that glory of God, that wealth of God, into an embodiment of expression—the house of God for the glory of God; for the house "is not for man, but for the Lord God," and "it must be exceeding magnificent" (I Chron. xxix. 1, and xxii. 5).

The thing which is governing all this description, and explains the care taken to give every detail in fulness, is the glory of God. So the riches are the riches of His glory. Solomon's riches and glory have passed, they have gone; but with the greater Son, the only-begotten of the Father, the true riches—the imperishable wealth that never passes—are stored up and brought over, as we shall see later, for setting forth in the Church. But for the present we note that they are firstly gathered up into Christ.

So the answer to our opening enquiry is this, finally and supremely; this great, full presentation of Solomon's wealth is to lead us to glorify God, to lead on to a worshipping people: for that is exactly what happened—the revelation of the glory of God in a man (but what a man!) resulting in a worshipping

people.

### (b) For the Enrichment of His People

The Queen of Sheba came to see because of the Name of the Lord (I Kings x. 1). The Name of the Lord is that which is involved in this. The Name of the Lord is bound up with the fulness of Christ; the glory of God depends upon how Christ is seen and known as the Divine fulness. It must come to this—we cannot keep away from it—that the Lord is only glorified as His real fulness is brought into practical revelation in Christ in the house of God. While the first and all-governing thing is this glorifying of God—*God* gave Solomon riches and power and wisdom, it all traces back to God—the thing which immediately issues is the enrichment of God's people. The Divine bounty was never intended to be limited to Solomon as a solitary individual, this one man by himself walking as an isolated unit in his kingdom, spending all his wealth upon himself, and, like one of his peacocks, strutting about in his own glory, turned in upon himself: like Nebuchadnezzar—“Is not this great Babylon, which *I* have built . . .” (Dan. iv. 30); there is nothing like that here. You notice that immediately it turns out to the people of God; it is for them, for their enrichment; not for personal and self-centred interests, but for Israel; and the Queen of Sheba puts her finger upon that—“Because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king.”

When you turn to the letter to the Ephesians, you have that remarkable and mysterious little phrase in Paul's prayer for a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ—“that ye may know . . . the *riches* of the glory of his inheritance in the saints” (Eph. i. 18). What does that mean? Well, in the mystery of God it may mean that Christ has something in the saints which is His inheritance, something which He—and He alone knows how it can be—regards as worth having, something for His own satisfaction, by which He Himself is enriched. I do not know how that can be, but I do see this, that Christ's inheritance is received from the Father, all the fulness of God is lavished upon Him and stored up in Him, and He brings it into the Church; His inheritance is brought into the saints. Whether that is a true exegesis or not I do not know absolutely; but I believe that there is truth in this, that Christ brings into the Church the wealth which He has inherited as the Son, just as Solomon brought into the house of God and into Israel this great wealth which had been given by God. It was His inheritance in the saints, not for Himself.

He had it without ever coming here—“ . . . the glory which I had with thee before the world was . . .” (John xvii. 5)—He had it all, He created all things. But now He has brought His fulness here, and “of his fulness we all received, and grace for grace” (John i. 16). “In him ye are made full” (Col. ii. 10). It is wealth for His people. So the glory of God works round that way. Dear friends, it is not to the glory of God that any child of His should be in spiritual poverty or that His Church should be lacking in spiritual wealth. God's thought, and what He is anxious to do, is to make His Church wealthy beyond its own dreams in the riches of Christ. Paul saw and knew something of this. “O the depth of the riches . . .” (Rom. xi. 33); and again, “the riches of his grace” (Eph. i. 7). It would take a long time to dwell upon the separate riches of Christ, all the riches of grace. We can only make the statement. My difficulty is to keep these things apart. I see that the greatness of the Church is something which has to be dealt with by itself, but here we overlap at once. The fulness, the riches, the bounty of Christ all that is stored up in Christ, is Churchwise, not individual-wise: it is corporate, it is collective. It will take the whole Body to be the adequate vessel of the fulness of Christ. Having said that, let us come back here. The glory of God is to be found in a people who have come into, and are daily living in, the good of the riches of Christ.

### (c) For Distribution by His People

That wealth is for their stewardship and distribution—that they have enough and plenty to give away. Have you plenty to give away? What about your stewardship? Is it a hard, hard labour of collecting enough to meet demand, or have you a margin for others? We are thinking in the realm of “Ephesians”—the “stewardship of the mystery” (Eph. iii. 9), something committed to us; but we have to see, the eyes of our heart must be enlightened that we may know the hope of His calling, the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe (Eph. i. 18-19); that we may see and know; in order to fulfil a stewardship it has to come from the inside. All this was in Solomon for his household and for the nation, and the fulness of Christ is for His people, for the Church, as a stewardship. I trust that this is not something that you do not understand, that is strange to you; but, even if it is, let it be stated with great emphasis that this is God's thought and intention for us, that we should



fulfil a stewardship of the riches of Christ. And that will be our vindication, our justification for existence, the Divine certificate for our ministry; there is no other ground. Have we got the goods, can we meet spiritual need? Will what we have solve the problem of spiritual weakness and limitation? When people are in desperation, then is the test of our stewardship; when people become conscious of their need, then should be the vindication of all our claims. Have we what is needed? This is the will of God concerning us, because it is all for us in Christ, the greater than Solomon.

### **His Food**

#### **(a) The Satisfaction of His People**

We come to food for a moment—Solomon's provision for one day. Living daily in an apprehension, a consciousness, a realisation, of how full Christ is—that is where God's glory is. This is not just a statement of fact; it is God's thought, God's will. And those who have really come to the place where Christ occupies the position which God has appointed for Him—have come there individually and in relationship with other believers—know very well that they have been delivered from spiritual limitation, and there is plenty, there is wealth, abundance, an open heaven, and the Lord is not restrained; He is giving and giving and giving. These things of Christ are all of a piece, and cannot really be isolated. You have to have the greatness of the Cross in order to know the wealth of Christ. You have to have the greatness of the Church in order to express the wealth of Christ. But given that the Cross has a large enough place objectively and subjectively, the heavens are open. Jordan is accomplished, and the heavens are opened upon Him Who is the beloved of God, this greater Jedidiah, "Beloved of the Lord"; upon Him the heavens are opened, and the attestation is made "My beloved . . ." (Matt. iii. 17). And "he hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Eph. i. 6). It is all of a piece. Jordan, the Cross, is very necessary; but, given that, the Lord's thought for you and for all is that you should be in the land of plenty, not struggling to make ends meet spiritually, worrying about where the next bit is coming from. One thing that the Lord would teach us is that we can count upon His supplies. It is wonderful! We may seem to have come to an end very often, but that is just the Lord's way of telling us that it is a new beginning, there is more yet. These are not just statements, they are facts. I do not know how much you really know. Those of us who minister considerably do know some-

thing about this. Nothing left; and then a new demand and a new fulness; and it goes on. The Lord would have it like that in His Church. Oh, the spiritual starvation! People going about saying, I cannot find any spiritual food, there is no meat, everything is so poor! Oh, how dishonouring to the Lord, how contrary to His mind, how it sets Christ at nought, what a little Christ that implies! No; God is glorified when Christ in His fulness is the experience of His people, just as Israel were experiencing the wealth of Solomon.

Food is intended to result in a satisfied people. Solomon's food was for the satisfaction, not only of himself, but of those dependent upon him. And this wealth of Christ, this fulness of Christ, this food that is in Christ, is firstly to make us satisfied people. I suppose that, in the days of Solomon's glory, to have walked up and down the land would have been to see people who were well content; and God is glorified when He has a people content with Himself, with His Son. Is that true of us? If it is not so, there is something wrong. We have no testimony and no challenge whatever unless that is true; we have no power, no authority. When others look upon our faces as Christians, what do they see? Starvation? Or do they see satisfied people? Are we talking to people out of doctrine, out of Scripture, and not out of our own hearts, our own experience? Dear friends, this is one practical challenge of the Word of God to us. Are you contented, deep down in your heart, with the Lord? Are you satisfied? Is He all that you want and more? That is simple, but it is testing. The glory of God is bound up with our being satisfied.

#### **(b) The Maturing of His People**

Secondly, food is for growth unto maturity. Are you growing? The proof of growth is this, that the fulness to you is something inexhaustible, beyond your present immediate need; it has met you here, but you realise there is something very much more; you have come into the realm where you need not go and glean in any other field, you have all you want here, and you are appropriating and growing thereby. Is that true? A people growing is a people that glorifies God, attaining unto all the fulness and the stature of a man in Christ.

### **His Wisdom**

#### **(a) Divine Principles Disclosed**

There are several passages that speak of the wisdom of Solomon. There is that one which tells us "he spake of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall" (I Kings iv. 33). How did he speak of trees? Was he

just a naturalist, describing trees and flowers, their beauty and so on? No, he showed that trees were symbols; there was wisdom. It was not just botany. Certain men of education will make anybody wise in that respect, but not in the sense that Solomon was wise. God gave him wisdom, and Solomon saw through the trees Divine principles. The cedar which is in Lebanon—what is it? It is the very symbol of nobility, of spiritual greatness. In the Old Testament, trees are types of men, and here in the trees there are characteristics hidden, Divine thoughts embodied; and Solomon was getting through the outer structure to the inner meaning, and unveiling the wisdom of God in the creation. In a word, Solomon was showing that everything that God makes is not just something made and something in itself; it embodies a Divine thought. All the ordinances of the heavens, all the heavenly bodies, all the forms of nature, embody some Divine thought and principle, and the wisdom of Solomon was in disclosing the Divine principles in nature.

### (b) Divine Secrets Apprehended

“He spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five” (I Kings iv. 32). What are proverbs? Well, they are statements with a hidden meaning. The same word is used of the speech of the Lord Jesus. Our word “parable” is only another word for “proverb.” “He spake . . . in parables” (Matt. xiii. 3, etc.), that is, statements with hidden meanings; and the wisdom of Solomon was in bringing out hidden meanings. And songs—instruments of worshipping and exaltation. You remember what the Apostle says about the Lord Jesus—“. . . in whom are *hid* . . .” (Col. ii. 3). The Lord Jesus does not talk to us merely about trees and nature in parables, but He says, “It is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom” (Matt. xiii. 11). In the Lord Jesus, there is, by the Holy Spirit, the disclosing of Divine secrets by which the very creation will realise its destiny. Do you see that the way to the realisation of God’s eternal purpose is the way of discovering the secrets of the Lord? Take the inclusive thing—the Church. The word “mystery” relates to it (Eph. iii. 3, etc.). It is God’s mystery, God’s secret. Before the world was, God conceived it and projected its eternal vocation to serve Him in high purpose through the ages of the ages. It is the deep secret of God. How, then, will you and I realise our very destiny according to God’s eternal choosing and appointing? Only as the Holy Spirit reveals to us the secrets of God. “Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, and

which entered not into the heart of man, whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him. But unto us God revealed them through the Spirit” (I Cor. ii. 9-10). What I am getting at is this, that it is not good enough just to read the Bible and take it as it stands on the surface. It is necessary for the Holy Spirit to disclose to us God’s hidden things as they are summed up in Christ. Christ is the wisdom of God, Christ is the fulness of Divine knowledge, the embodiment of all that by which we are coming to the realisation of that great destiny and purpose for which we are chosen in Christ; but there has to be a work of the Holy Spirit disclosing what is in Christ to our hearts. It has to be along this line and after this kind—that the Spirit shows us something in Christ, and we say, I have never seen that before. It comes with the power of a revelation which changes us from that time right on, and makes all the difference. There is something more in that than just reading a passage of Scripture. You may read a passage a thousand times and know it by heart, and then the Spirit says something and that old familiar portion lights up, and you are brought to a new place in consequence.

But remember that all this must be practically expressed. I know that it is said that the Queen of Sheba *heard* of the wisdom of Solomon, and the Lord Jesus said she came to *hear* his wisdom, but it also says that she *saw* the wisdom of Solomon. “And when the Queen of Sheba had seen all the wisdom of Solomon, and the house that he had built, and the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and the ascent by which he went up into the house of the Lord . . .” (I Kings x. 4-5). This was wisdom to be seen, not only to be heard. The greatness of Christ is not something just to be listened to; it is something to be seen, to be manifested, in those who circle round Him. The Church is to show forth the excellencies of Him who called out of darkness into His marvellous light (I Pet. ii. 9); to show forth the wisdom, to make the wealth to be seen. We have already spoken of the need for manifesting the satisfaction which we have in Christ. Let us see to it also that our apprehension of the Divine thoughts does not remain only in the realm of our understanding. And even if after all that we have been saying about the greatness of Christ you do not really grasp its significance and have nothing more than just this impression—that Christ is much greater than ever you thought He was: that will do to begin with; but ask for something more than that—that it may

become an inward reality and a working factor in your life. "Oh, what a Christ have-I!"  
T.A-S.

## For Boys and Girls

### GOSPEL MESSAGES FROM THE ANTARCTIC (No. 2)

"I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God"  
(Acts viii. 37).

**C**APT. SCOTT and his men travelled as far south as they could possibly go by ship and then landed on an island where they built their hut and from which they began their exploring. Their principal object was to try and reach the South Pole. The only possible way to it lay across what is called the Great Ice Barrier. This is a great plain of solid ice, of immense thickness and hundreds of miles long and wide, that creeps on its way towards the sea like a very slowly moving river. It travels at the rate of a yard or two a day, so that for practical purposes we can say that it does not move at all; at any rate, you would not be afraid of being lost by drifting away to sea on it! Where it reaches the open sea great pieces of it break off and float away as icebergs, leaving the end of it looking like a great cliff of ice.

To get on to the Barrier the explorers had to cross the sea around their island and then climb up. The sea was often frozen and they had to go across on foot; but they never knew quite what to expect, for the condition of the ice sometimes changed very quickly. At times it would be so solid as to seem almost as immovable as the Barrier itself, and then in a very short time it would break up without much warning, and a sudden wind springing up would carry it out to sea, and where there had been seemingly solid ice but a short time before there would be open water.

This fact accounted for one of the earliest adventures that befell some of the explorers. Three men, with four ponies, were travelling over the sea ice. The ice seemed firm and safe, and so at a point the men decided to camp for the night. They tethered their ponies, pitched their tents, and went to sleep. In the middle of the night one of the men was awakened by a noise, and looking out he was horrified to find that the ice all around them had broken into pieces, and they and their camp were floating out to sea on a little island of ice. He wakened his companions and for many hours they worked hard to move their ponies and equipment towards the firm ice of the Barrier, jumping from one island of ice to another as they had opportunity. It was a

terrible experience and more than once it seemed as if they must drift out to sea and be lost. But by great efforts they succeeded in reaching the Barrier and saved their lives—though three of their four ponies were drowned.

I have not space to give you more of the thrilling details, but you will guess that the men learned from this experience not to trust in treacherous sea ice even though it looked all right. The only safe ice was on the Barrier. Whatever difficulties and dangers there might be there—and there were plenty!—at least there was no risk of drifting away. And besides—the Barrier was the high road to everywhere else that they desired to reach, and if they were to make any progress at all they *must* get on to the Barrier and stay there.

Now all this is true also in the exploration on which you and I agreed in our last talk that we would set out together—to explore that wealthy land called "in Christ." We shall find on our journey what we may call safe Barrier ice and dangerous sea ice, and until we get on to the Barrier and stay there we shall make no progress in our exploring; we may even drift right away and be lost altogether. The story of John the Baptist will show what I mean. We first read of him in Matt. iii. (please look it up). What a strong, bold servant of God he was, speaking so fearlessly and confidently to the people! We feel, as we read, that he had made some grand discoveries about the Lord, and that he was standing firmly on absolutely solid ground. Nothing could move him! No fear of his drifting helplessly out to sea! And yet when we turn to Matt. xi. (please read it) we find him there an altogether different man. He is doubting and uncertain—not sure where he stands—wondering whether things which he had formerly believed were really true after all. He seems to be adrift—as if the ice under him has broken up and is carrying him away into darkness and despair. We feel we want to shout to him: "Get off that unsafe ice, John! Run for your life! At any cost get up on to the Barrier again: you'll be safe there!" What had made all the difference? We shall find the answer in two verses, both of which tell us what John was thinking about the Lord Jesus.

1. John i. 34. "I have seen that . . . this is the Son of God."



2. Matt. xi. 3. "Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?"

How confident the first statement is, and how full of doubt the second! Do you see what has happened to bring John on to such dangerous ice? He has allowed doubt to lodge in his mind as to who Jesus is. He began magnificently—"This is the Son of God." The Lord Jesus tells us Himself that this is the really solid ground. (Please find it in Matt. xvi.) He asked His disciples, "Who say ye that I am?" and Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Then Jesus said, ". . . upon this rock I will build my church . . ." Do you notice what the Lord said—"this rock"? Peter was well up on the solid Barrier when he gave that answer! The confession, given right out from his heart, that Jesus was the Son of God was the sure ground and the starting point for everything else. And that is where I want you to begin your exploring. Ask God to show you in your heart, as He showed to Peter, what it means that Jesus is the Son of God. Say it to yourself again and again. Believe it with all your heart. Believe it even when (as with John the Baptist) it does not seem as if it can be true. Believe it when people around you are denying it and saying that He was only an ordinary man like the

rest of us. Never allow a doubt concerning it to lodge in your heart or mind, for the very moment you entertain the doubt you will be on unsafe ice and begin to drift.

Could this be said of just an ordinary man—"Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"? or this—"in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. ii. 3, 9)? Yet these things are said of Jesus—whom we love to call the Lord Jesus Christ. Truly He was not simply a man like other men. He was the very Son of God; and the boy or girl who marvels most at Him, who believes the biggest things about Him and to whom He is most wonderful, will be the one who makes the richest discoveries about Him. That is the way to the "South Pole" for us! The one who has the biggest and most wonderful Lord Jesus, will get there first! Shall we not, like Thomas, call Him, "My Lord and my God" (John xx. 28) and cry with Paul "that I may know Him"—and press toward the goal with all our heart?

Wonderful, wonderful, Jesus is to me.  
Counsellor, Prince of Peace, Mighty God is He.  
Saving me, keeping me, from my sin and shame,  
Wonderful is my Redeemer, praise His Name!

G.P.

## The Spiritual Clinic

### The Paralysis of a Spiritual Irregularity

FROM observation of the maladies which come upon the people of God and bring arrest to His work through them, we have been much impressed with the fact that the violation of a Divine order is the cause of much trouble. If it is true that what God is doing in this age is not just saving individuals as such but constituting a "Body" and building a "House" by the addition of each saved one, then the right position of each is vital to perfect functioning and heavenly order. There is an order, and there is a position for each member. It is not given to us—let us say it with emphasis—to appoint the place or to manipulate into position. That is the work of the Holy Spirit. What we do say is that each member has his or her place, and God knows what it is. Under the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit each member should come into that place. If they fail to do so, or get into a wrong place, they miss their essential ministry and upset the effectiveness of the Body:

"Now hath God set the members . . ." (1 Cor. xii. 18). Articulation is essential to

life.

"Unto each . . . was the grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ" (Eph. iv. 7).

"Having gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us . . ." (Rom. xii. 6).

There are not a few illustrations of dislocation and irregularity in the Scriptures:—

Dathan and Abiram and their company (Numbers xvi.).

Aaron and Miriam (Numbers xii.).

Saul going over the head of Samuel (1 Sam. xiii. 9).

Uzziah presuming into the priest's office (2 Chron. xxvi. 16).

Paul has very much to say on matters of order in the Church, and it is not merely the individual position which is of importance, but the relative factor and element. Independent action is as dangerous as dislocation, it robs of covering and protection and exposes to enemy forces. There is a heavenly order, a spiritual system, and the relationships and ministries of believers are to be according to those spiritual principles and a reflection of that heavenly order.

What Paul says about woman's place in ministry and the domestic relationships of the saints can only be understood and appreciated in this light.

When one called of God to do the work of an evangelist assumes the role of a teacher, or vice-versa, or any one marked out for a particular functioning attempts to do some other, or when one goes beyond their scope and assumes any prerogative which is not theirs by Divine ordering, they are in the way of an arrested ministry; and more, they will be landed into serious confusion. People and things—otherwise occupying a vital position in the Divine plan—put into their wrong places have the Divine unction withdrawn from them. This becomes manifest, and the spiritually undiscerning conclude that the thing or the person is outside the Divine purpose and

accordingly rule them out. Thus much confusion and loss ensues.

Undoubtedly in New Testament times there was the recognition of the corporate nature of the Church, and the definite prayer which followed the baptism of everyone who thereby testified to their identification with Christ was the initial setting forth of this relative position and this truth of articulation, adjustment, and function. The Holy Ghost came in and took up the superintendence from that time, and any disorder thenceforth was against Him. In these few lines we have encircled a very wide and important field of truth and would plead for a prayerful retracing step by step with the Word. The Holy Spirit's method is to set His seal upon us as we move according to His leading, not according to our fancy, choice, aptitude, predeliction or ambition.

T. A-S.

## “ God Hath Spoken ”

### The Final Message of God

#### Preamble

THE “ Preface ” to any book is intended to serve the purpose of letting its readers know what the writer has to say as to his purpose in writing, and anything that does not really form a part of the subject matter. While it ought to be regarded as important, many people do not read the Preface, and by not doing so, may unintentionally do the writer an injustice. To guard against this risk, I ask at the outset for a careful perusal of what follows.

I am well aware that what will be said will represent for multitudes of Christians to-day no less an upheaval and revolution than that which was presented at the beginning by the transition from Judaism to a fully-fledged Christianity as presented by the Apostles when they were through that transition and interpreted the significance of Christ. If it should cause or result in as violent a reaction and hostility, it will be no surprise.

There are two causes for comfort in such a case: one is the deep sense of Divine urge and commission to write, “ whether they will hear or whether they will forbear ”; and the other, the knowledge that for a long time and in an ever deepening way there has been a growing realisation on the part of many that all is not well with Christendom, even with evangelical Christianity. With the exception of two classes of Christians, there is an increasing concern over the actual or comparative weakness and ineffectiveness of the spiritual life

and witness of Christians and the churches. This concern shows itself in various ways. Sometimes by enquiries and discussions as to what is wrong, and sometimes in the holding of an increased number of conventions and meetings “ for the deepening of the spiritual life.”

The two classes excepted are, those who have so organised Christian activity as to have made it all a matter of a tremendous business to be maintained by drive and its own momentum: which unceasing activity is itself thought to be life and power: with the result that there is little time or interest to be given in the matter of spiritual depth, and Divine measure. The other class is comprised of those who are so settled in tradition and a fixed position in doctrine and practice as to make it wellnigh impossible for the Holy Spirit to lead into the way of a greater fulness of Christ. Both of these conditions marked Judaism in the first days, and they both provided a ground for the strong resentment and antagonism from which the Apostles and first believers had to suffer.

It is not too much to say that a time and state of crisis is upon traditional Christianity. This, and its nature, will be shown more fully in what follows; but in concluding the Preamble may I ask that, should you at any point be so vexed as to be inclined to put the whole thing aside, you will just pause and give place to a supposition. Supposing it *should* be right? In the year 1939 many responsible people, governments, and officials, came under severe condemnation because—it was said—

they refused to believe facts. For years Germany had been most thoroughly establishing Fifth Column agents and forces in almost every country. But whenever anyone said so and warned the Governments of those countries that it was so, not only was the suggestion repudiated, but evil intent was disbelieved. Well, the persistently disbelieved reports proved true, but it meant suffering, sorrow, and horror unparalleled in history. Supposing that in 1939 someone had prophesied that in less than a year Germany would have defeated and overrun Holland, Belgium, and France, in addition to a number of other European countries, what would have happened to such a prophet? He would have been ridiculed, if not put into prison or an asylum as a defeatist or a lunatic. He, himself, most likely would have been regarded as an enemy agent, as in effect were Jeremiah and other prophets of old. But those "unbelievable" things became actualities. Thus, untold suffering and loss are the price of refusing to entertain a supposition.

But there was another factor of a very subtle nature. It was a studied part of the success of that German technique that the agents should spread abroad the impression that no such evil intent existed. To disarm suspicion and impress with good will was a vital part of the success of the scheme. This has its counterpart in the "heavenlies," and it will only be those who keep much in the secret place with the All-knowing Spirit of God who will be saved from the infinite perils which lie in the way of a superficial optimism which is such a secret weapon of Satan's campaign against the fulness of Christ.

Pause then, and ask, Supposing what is here written should be right? Would it result in *spiritual and eternal* loss or gain? Supposing it should eventually prove to be God's message?

## THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS

### (i) The Approach

In the Preamble we have used the word Crisis. The letter which is before us had its occasion in a crisis in two dimensions or phases. Immediately, it was related to those who had taken a real step with Christ and were in peril of resolving Christianity into a Judaism which acknowledged rather than rejected Him. But it also related to the great event which was imminent, in which the whole Jewish system would be swept away, and all the prophecies as to Israel's rejection and scattering would be fulfilled. It is always important to remember that, when God deals

with any of His people on a spiritual issue, there is always a literal issue bound up with it sooner or later. He would save us from the historic disaster which He knows to be coming by putting us into a spiritual position where the event will be no disaster *to us*. Thus the crisis is a turning point—as in a critical illness—with life or death as the issue. The letter repeatedly warns and entreats in the light of the tremendous consequences which are in the balances. We may say without fear of being contradicted that some of the most terrible things in the whole Bible are found in this letter. Thus does it become us to note the significance of the opening statements.

God in past times spoke in fragments and various ways, but now He has spoken in fulness and in one all-inclusive way, and that with finality. He will not speak again; He will neither add to nor vary what He has said in the final way. The fragmentary speech of God in past ages had very great consequences involved in man's attitude and reaction; but that was small compared with what is bound up with this final Speech. This kind of approach is preserved like a theme through the whole letter; it comes to the ear in various connections, sometimes beautiful, sometimes terrible. The upshot of it all is this: You have had in your midst and available to you the *full* Revelation of God's mind. For that you are now responsible. That Revelation was, and is, intended to bring you into a certain spiritual position and to govern the entire order of your life. The measure of your spiritual life in terms of Divine satisfaction will be determined by your living apprehension of and obedience to that Revelation. *The degree of your ineffectiveness and unfruitfulness, individually and collectively, will declare the degree of your failure in your apprehension of that Revelation.*

The letter is intended to be tremendously serious. While it contains most glorious things, it is the possibility of missing these (a possibility so nearly becoming an actuality in the case of its first readers) which makes the tone so solemn at times. Thus our approach must be with the shoes off our feet: the shoes of prejudice, self-sufficiency, pride, formalism, and such-like. Having adjusted our approach, we are able to contemplate something of the import or implications of the letter.

### (ii) The Implications

It is here that we have to begin to say some of the things not easy to say, and still less easy to accept.

This letter to the Hebrews sets forth the all-



inclusive revolution or reconstitution which God made when He brought His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world—that is, the *religious* revolution. This revolution, which was rejected by Judaism, has been almost entirely overlooked or lost sight of by Christendom since Apostolic times.

The entire present system of Christianity as generally accepted would be impossible if the meaning of this letter were received as a heavenly revelation in the power of the Holy Spirit. That is—if it came into the heart by the Spirit's power with the effect of a revelation in the same way as the Apostle Paul came to see who "Jesus of Nazareth" is, then a Christian-Judaism, or Judaistic-Christianity (which Christendom so largely is) would be impossible; as it became in his own case. The letter to the Hebrews is only one other aspect of the battle fought out in the letters to the Romans and Galatians. In the light of such a spiritual eye-opening a whole lot of things would go: but being a "heavenly vision," there would be no tears, no sense of loss, and no fond farewells. The gain and joy would rather put all such things into the category of a worn-out and no-longer-to-be-desired suit of clothes. In saying this we are only contemplating the full-tide of spiritual life known before any of these things came into being. These things only came in when the fulness of the Spirit had gone out, and being an artificial substitute they can never but be limiting things in the realm of Divine purpose. And yet, behold how these things have become the very nature of traditional and organised Christianity! So much so that to touch them in any way which threatens their existence is to meet something more bitter and formidable than any persecution from the world. This is not said carelessly. Religion can be, and is very largely, a terrible force; and Christianity has become a religion. There are very few communities of Christians—even the most evangelical, and spiritual—who wholly escape the tendency or propensity to persecute or ostracise other bodies of Christians who might be regarded as rivals in *their* field of activity. All the talk about "sheep-stealing" has little or nothing to do with stealing from *the* fold or *the* Shepherd, but only relates to some private religious fold of organised Christianity.

We have—without mentioning them specifically—spoken of things which would have to go if a true spiritual revelation were received, and doubtless the reader is wondering what those things are. Well, this letter which we are considering will make them plain, so let us come closer to it. On the very face of it there appears for all who have eyes the contrast

between Judaism and Christ. Judaism was an earthly religious system: Tabernacle, Temple, Priests, Vestments, Rites, Sacrifices, Feasts, Ministries, Orders, etc. The New Testament, and this letter in particular, has some very clear things to say about this Jewish system.

### (i) As to its intent and purpose

It was instituted by God as a copy of things in the heavens. Not that heaven contained such things literally, but just as all visible and created things were intended to embody heavenly laws and principles, so this system was intended to represent the centremost spiritual things of God's universe. But the instrument or type was never intended to do more than serve a purpose *for a time*. It represented a dispensation, or method of God for a period only. Never was it intended to be an end in itself, nor was it meant to be carried on in any detail or respect beyond a certain point in time. God meant it ever and always to be a prophecy of "better things to come," and to be held so loosely as to constitute no difficulty when the "better things" arrived. The letter which is before us affirms that the era of the "better things" had arrived some time since. "God . . . hath at the end of these days spoken . . . in his Son."

But the new era and new order had brought out a new and mightier-than-ever conflict. A very serious and grim part of that conflict was with the religion of tradition, the religion which worshipped the same Lord, and embodied *in a symbolic way* all the truth of the new era. One great warrior apostle was the champion of the new spiritual order—himself one who had been deeply and powerfully embedded in the old system, but by a mighty revelation emancipated from it. He called that revelation "the heavenly vision," and that word "heavenly" defined for ever the nature of the change in the dispensations. Into this battle he was forced by the ubiquitous Judaisers. It was fought in his letters to the Romans and to the Galatians. Whether or not we believe that Paul wrote the letter to the Hebrews, there is no doubt that he had a big part of influence in it, and in it again is the same battle carried on.

If the main feature of Judaism is sought, it will be found to be the resolving of heavenly and spiritual things into a purely earthly system. It is the making of the things of God purely sentient, a matter of the physical and soul senses: sight, sound, feeling, reason, emotion, etc., with the numerous and various complex elements of human constitution. One

of the inclusive arguments of this letter is that a religious system based upon the natural senses has no power to bring those who adhere to it to spiritual fulness. Such the Jewish system was, and it failed utterly and tragically. God did not mean it to do more than lead to something other; and in this dispensation even that is set aside and the other has become the first and only thing in God's acceptance. The earthly, natural, and temporal has been supplanted by the heavenly, spiritual and eternal, which lay behind the illustration. The failure was inevitable because it was never intended to be an end in itself, and because of man's condition. It only operated at all in the realm of man's soul, a very unstable and variable thing; whereas everything with God is a matter of man's spirit, *in the first instance*. This is the point of verse twelve of Chapter four, which should be considered with the context preceding.

The whole thought of God, running right through this letter, is spiritual fulness; and any religion—even Christianity—mixing and confusing soul and spirit, the sentient and the spiritual (as did the Christian-Judaism and as does organised Christianity) is doomed to the destiny of Judaism. If we draw upon the soul resources of people to build up Christianity, instead of recognising that "all things are out from God"—that all must first come from Him and have its first point of contact with man in his spirit, which, being renewed

(made anew) becomes the vessel and vehicle of all divine things for ever after—no matter how immense may be our structure, it is going to crash when the great "shaking" comes. Christianity now is very largely a built up thing with many Jewish features in it; i.e., outward orders, forms, vestments, titles, buildings and rigidly fixed boundaries of apprehension of truth. Viewed from a heavenly standpoint, it is all so much nonsense, child's-play; albeit so seriously regarded by its children.

It is important to recognise that this letter was addressed to a people who—for a long period—had held the position nationally of a people whom God had taken out of the world unto Himself. It seeks to explain their nature and history in the light of Christ and true spiritual Christianity. It shows that even such a people may make their separation earthly and earthbound, and that for so doing they have been "overthrown," and will—even as Christians—be overthrown again if they repeat in Christianity what their fathers did in Judaism. There is something here much more than typology interpreted and the interpretation accepted as to salvation from sin and judgment; it is the essential and indispensable heavenly relatedness and life of the Lord's people as *inwardly* detached from the natural life even in a religious sense.

T. A-S.

*To be continued.*

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# A WITNESS AND A TESTIMONY

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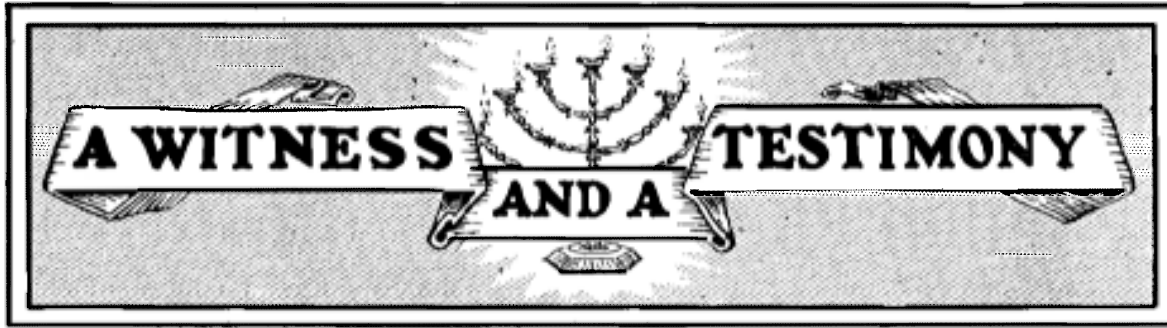
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No. 3, Vol. 25.

## Four Greatnesses of Divine Revelation

### III

#### The Greatness of Christ as Son

WE come now to one particular thing at the heart of this whole matter of the greatness of Christ, something lying beneath the choice of Solomon, and summing up his significance—and that is his sonship. We are passing as quickly as we can from Solomon to Christ. Perhaps we might remind ourselves of some of the words said about him in this connection. The Lord said to David—

“Solomon thy son, he shall build my house and my courts; for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father” (I Chron. xxviii. 6).

Now that, as the first fragment in that connection, gives us the key to the basis of this matter of sonship. Let me say again this general word, before we come to the particular, that the significance of Solomon lies in that word, for, while Solomon's kingship did represent the very peak of Israel's history in the matter of the monarchy, David is always, in the Word of God, kept to the fore as the greatest of Israel's kings. David certainly was a very much greater man than Solomon when it comes to personalities; and it might be wondered at that things did not end there with David, seeing that he was what he was in the Divine thought, and was going for ever after to be kept by God in the first place of Israel's kings. Why did not the history stop with David? For this reason, that a spiritual principle is being held to by God in a sovereign way; and the principle is that everything is

gathered up in sonship. Ultimately, it is sonship which represents and embodies all God's thought. So the one thing that is constantly reiterated about Solomon is sonship. “Thy son . . . my son.” David said, “Of all my sons (for the Lord hath given me many sons), he hath chosen Solomon my son” (I Chron. xxviii. 5)—the inclusiveness of sonship, and, in a certain sense, the exclusiveness also. It is this word “son” that rules where Solomon is concerned. And when we come over to Christ, to the greater Son of David, we find that everything heads up to, and takes its character and its meaning from, His Sonship. Well, that is a general statement of fact which you will do well to remember and to ponder, for reasons which will become apparent as we go on.

We find that in this matter John and Paul are the great exponents. John presents Christ pre-eminently as the Son. He sums up all his Gospel in a statement that everything written therein was with one object—that the readers might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the *Son* of God, and that believing they might have life in His Name (John xx. 31). John, then, presents Christ as the Son. It is the Person that John has in view.

Paul also represents Christ as the Son, but he goes further. I said just now that there was nothing further. What I mean is this, that Paul goes on to open up the content of sonship, and to show that there is an aspect of it which is a related matter. By the Holy Spirit *we* are sons. Christ is a first one, the Firstborn; and (leaving out the factor of deity)

sonship as a relationship is something into which we are called; and that is Paul's great theme—the meaning of sonship; the content, the explanation, the relatedness, the inclusiveness of it.

Now it is with these two things that we shall be occupied a little while at this time, and here we must make some links in the Word:—

“Moreover the Lord telleth thee that the Lord will make thee a house. When thy days are fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, that shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son” (II Sam. vii. 11-14).

“He shall build a house for my name; and he shall be my son, and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever” (I Chron. xxii. 10).

“Solomon thy son, he shall build my house and my courts; for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father. And I will establish his kingdom for ever” (I Chron. xxviii. 6).

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers, that God hath fulfilled the same unto our children, in that he raised up Jesus; as also it is written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he hath spoken on this wise, I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David” (Acts xiii. 32-34).

“Unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? and again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? . . . But of the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; and the sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of thy kingdom” (Heb. i. 5, 8).

### Son on the Principle of Eternity

I think it is quite patent that the things said by God to and concerning Solomon were not meant to be fulfilled in their entirety and fullness in him. The Lord was speaking with a further thought, with a mind beyond Solomon. He was really, in His own mind, speaking about the Lord Jesus. Solomon would be but a temporary, partial fulfilment of what God said about sonship, and about the kingdom and the house. God was thinking further on. (That is our manner of speaking as men. God

does not speak in past, present and future; everything is present with Him, an eternal Now, and, when He spoke, Christ was present in mind and intention with Him. But so far as we are concerned, as children of time, the completeness of the statement related to the future, to the Lord Jesus.) “I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son”; “I will establish his kingdom”—these words were spoken of Solomon, but it is not difficult to see that, in the case of the Lord Jesus, there is an infinite transcendence. There is something here in connection with Him which goes far beyond anything that was possible in the case of Solomon, and the one thing which proves that is the very language that the Lord uses—“I will establish his throne *for ever*”; that was not true of Solomon, that is not true of Israel, but that is true of the Lord Jesus.

What I am stressing in the first place is this, that John and Paul bring Christ into view as Son on the principle of eternity. You know how John seeks to press that home in his Gospel in a number of very impressive ways. He opens, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”: clearly intending to emphasize the eternity of this sonship, for he very soon comes into time—“And the Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us”; that is the time aspect, the Now; the other is timeless. In other ways he seeks to emphasize the eternity of the Son, but there is one way which is tremendously impressive throughout John. It is the way in which he uses the title “I am.” That title comes out specifically, and I think supremely, in John xviii, in the narrative of the guard, led by Judas, coming to take Jesus. There He was with His disciples, and the band with lanterns and torches and weapons arrived. He quietly said, “Whom seek ye?” They said, “Jesus of Nazareth.” He said, “I am,” and they went backward and fell to the ground. And He said again, “Whom seek ye?” “Jesus of Nazareth.” “I told you that I am.” (There is no “he” there, as you will know; “I am he” is not in the text at all.) “I AM!” You are at once taken right back to Moses. “And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you” (Exodus iii. 13-14). You remember the other occasion when the Lord Jesus used that title for Himself—“Before Abraham was, I am” (John viii.



58). What a mix-up of tenses! "Before Abraham was, I am." That takes us outside of our language altogether, right out of time and of natural sense, into God's realm. I AM is not time at all; I AM is not this world at all. I AM is from everlasting to everlasting. John brings in Christ as Son on that basis of eternity.

But Paul not only brings Christ in in His eternity—he begins to build the Church upon that eternity. In the letters to the Ephesians and Colossians which are in my mind just now, we have Christ in His eternity, and then—"he chose us in him before the foundation of the world" (Eph. i. 4). From that eternal election and fore-ordination and predestination Paul builds the Church. He says, This is no thing of time or of earth; this is a thing which has its roots and its foundation away back in eternity, and it goes on unto the ages of the ages. Time is a mere fragment in this thing. Paul is building upon the eternity of Christ. What has that to say to us? Well, of course, it bears out our first and all-governing point—the transcendence of Christ over Solomon. This greater than Solomon that is here, this Son, how infinitely more He is than that son!

What is sonship? In accordance with God's full thought—not His partial thought in Solomon: that is only representation and type and figure and shadow: but in reality—it is something which takes its rise out of eternity and goes on when time shall be no more. That is sonship in God's thought. But what more does it say to us? Chosen in Him before the world was, foreknown, fore-ordained, predestinated before time was: what does it convey? Well, I AM is the synonym for stability—"Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever"—the stability of Christ, the stability of the Church, and the stability of saints. Oh, what an assurance, what a strength, what an immense thing for faith is this matter of the sovereign grace of God! Grace working hand in hand with sovereignty! As we have pointed out before, there is no accounting for Solomon, seeing what happened in relation to his birth, except for the sovereign grace of God, and that is the essence of sonship. Yes, sovereignty and grace; how vast! how great!

We have said before that emancipation from all our difficulties and problems will be along the line of spiritual enlargement, and spiritual enlargement will be by way of a new and far greater apprehension of Christ; and here it is. Look at Him! What is the object of telling us all this about Christ? Do we just want information that Christ is God's Son, and that He was one with the Father in eternity, and will be for ever and ever? I am quite reverent

in asking that question, and in saying that, as a purely objective matter somewhere out in God's universe, it does not matter to me very much. But when you say that God has revealed this to men, then I want to know why. What is in the Divine mind in revealing it? And the answer is here—you and I are concerned in it, we were chosen in relation to it before the world was, in Him we are bound up with it. Oh then, receiving eternal life, age-binding life, being linked with the eternal Son of God, what an immense thing it is! Sonship goes beyond anything that is merely temporary and transient. Our union with Christ brings us right into the roots of His eternity, not only in duration but in character, in nature; for eternal life is not merely endless duration, it is the glory of God in nature, in essence. So Paul builds everything upon this fact of eternity, and brings us in. What a wonderful revelation! As a mere presentation of truth it is fascinating, captivating, bewildering. But, brought home by the Holy Spirit, how transforming it can be, how establishing, how emancipating! Oh, if only the Church lived in the good of that, how all these petty, temporary factors would go out! After all, what does this and that matter? It is only for a time and for this world at most; but the thing that matters is what God is doing above and beyond this world altogether. Well, that is the first thing which comes in here through John and through Paul; Christ as the Son, and then the content and nature of sonship.

#### Son in Terms of Sovereignty

Then John brings in Christ as Son as Sovereign King—brings Him in in a strange way, but how deep, how terrific in its significance:—

"Pilate therefore entered again into the Praetorium, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered, Sayest thou this of thyself, or did others tell it thee concerning me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice" (John xviii. 33-37).

A strange way of bringing in the Son in

terms of sovereignty! There is a statement here—"My kingdom is not of this world." It is just a naked statement made in the presence of no one who could understand it, but it is recorded by John with a purpose, linking sonship and kingship. But Paul not only takes up the fact; he explains the statement, opens it out.

"My kingdom is not of this world"; what has Paul to say about that?

"... he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenlies, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things . . . ." (Eph. i. 20-22).

There we stop; the next words take us to the greatness of the Church, and we are dealing with the greatness of Christ. That is Paul's explanation of Christ's statement—"My kingdom is not of this world"; "... at his right hand in the heavenlies, far above all rule, and authority." You cannot say that of Solomon. Great as Solomon was—and the statement about Solomon is that he was vastly superior in every sense to every other king that was known—here is One who leaves Solomon altogether in the shade; far above all rule and authority, not on this earth only, but in every realm, over all things; the greatness of Christ the Son in terms of kingship.

But then what about His kingdom? "I will establish his kingdom for ever" (I Chron. xxviii. 7). Oh, that has its full fulfilment in Christ, in His kingdom. Paul takes this up in Colossians.

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

How I would like to stop there, by way of parenthesis, to try and disentangle the situation into which Christianity has got to-day through mixing up the idea of the Kingdom and the Church—a tangle which is entirely the cause of its weakness and defeat. What I mean is this, that to-day the Lord's people—yes, even evangelical Christianity—are trying to run the Church on the Solomon-kingdom line; that is, an earthly thing, something in this world, to be seen, known, heard of, taken account of by and in this world; bigness to impress, to write up; to gain place and influence by names, titles and all the things that belong to this world; and they call it 'extending the Kingdom,' and they have a false idea of the Kingdom. Here Paul links these two things for this dispensation—Church and

Kingdom—and says it is heavenly, not of this world at all. He goes on immediately after this—

"If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth" (Col. iii. 1-2).

No, not even in a religious way. "My kingdom is not of this world" said the Lord, and Paul explains it. The Church in this dispensation is the embodiment of the Kingship and Kingdom principles of Christ in a spiritual way, and they lift the Church clean out of this world and make it a heavenly thing. Immediately we begin to get a church with its own orders and forms and means which belong to this earth, in architecture and vestments and all that sort of thing, we are back on a Solomon basis of the Kingdom, and we have left the heavenly basis of the Church.

"My kingdom is not of this world" said John as to this Son, and Paul explains: "... seated at his right hand in the heavenlies, far above all rule," "all things in subjection under his feet," "head over all things." But where is it? Go over the world and see where you can find it, and the only thing you will find is that ghastly caricature of it, the Pope and the Roman Church—a false presentation of this "head over all things to the church," a temporal thing. With Paul it is a spiritual thing. In union with Christ, we are not only lifted out of time into eternity, but out of earth into the heavens; and all now is of a spiritual and heavenly order in this dispensation. "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight." That is the statement; that is putting it in one way. Put the other way—Because My Kingdom is not of this world, my servants do not fight, do not fight with flesh and blood, for its establishment. Paul tells us what that means—"Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies" (Eph. vi. 12). That is what Christ meant; it is Christ speaking and explaining Himself through Paul, explaining what He said to Pilate when there was no one who could understand. Now it is possible to explain. The Spirit has come and formed a company of people who, by the Spirit, are capable of understanding things the Lord said when no one did understand, when He had to say, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit

when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth" (John xvi. 12-13); and here it is. Not with flesh and blood; it is spiritual. It has gone out into a vast realm so much greater than the realm of Solomon, but it is in and from that realm that everything is being governed. Do not make any mistake about it; this world and the kingdoms of this world are not taking their own course, and they are not ultimately taking the Devil's course. Yes, the world-rulers of this darkness—that is the immediate scene, the Devil's work; but behind there is One Who is using the Devil and his work, Whose servant Satan is, Who is Sovereign Lord, far above all rule and dominion, authority and name, whatever that name may be, man or Devil. He is over all. Either the Scripture is not true, or that is a fact.

How tremendous this sovereignty of the Lord Jesus is! So many of our problems will begin to dissolve when we get a true conception of the greatness of Christ! Why this, why that, why the other? Why does Satan seem to have it all his own way? Why does Satan score and win? Are you sure he does? Look beyond, and see if that very work of Satan is not going to be taken up into the sovereignty of our Lord and made eventually to have served the Divine ends. "I would have you know, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel" (Phil. i. 12). The sufferings of the Church at the hands of devils and men have, in the end, resulted in the furtherance of the work of God.

### Son as Redeeming Kinsman

John, then, presents Him as King; yes, in humiliation, in suffering, but King. Oh, there is a marvellous secret and mystery there which it would take me too long to deal with now. I see it there but dimly, but I see it in that outstanding, selected, incident in the life of Solomon—selected as an isolated example of his wisdom. No doubt there were many others, but this was taken out of them all, and recorded as an example—the two women and the two babes. They were living and sleeping together, and in the night one of the babes was overlaid and died. The woman, whose babe that was, quietly put her dead child over by the other mother, and took the living baby to herself. In the morning, the rightful mother saw that her child was gone and this dead one was not hers, and went to Solomon about it. The two women were arraigned before Solomon and the whole problem was presented to him. Solomon, with that insight, discernment, wisdom which God had given—and remember

wisdom is always the means by which problems are solved—decided on a very radical course, and called for a sword and said, Divide the living child in two, and give half to each of the women. That settled it! The false mother stood as a spectator, coldly unmoved by this procedure. The rightful mother let go, let go herself, let go her own rights, for the life of that child. "Oh," she said, "give her the living child, and in no wise slay it." In effect, Do not kill my child, even if I must part with it; I let go all that is dear to me; if it costs me everything, let the child live. Solomon said—That is the mother, give her the child.

Do you remember the Lord Jesus saying—"He that is a hireling, and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, beholdeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth, and the wolf snatcheth them, and scattereth them: he fleeth because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; . . . and I lay down my life for the sheep" (John x. 12-14). Have you got the principle in the two things? You have to solve this problem of life and death. How is it going to be solved? By yielding up your own life. This is true of Christ. He could only solve this problem, and establish His right, His claim, His ownership, by letting go. "Whosoever would save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. xvi. 25). It would take much longer than that properly to investigate the matter, but I see dimly a kingship here. A greater than Solomon is here; He is dealing with a much greater problem and situation. His right, His ownership, has to be established. How will He do it? By grasping, by fighting in the flesh, by asserting Himself? No, by giving His life a ransom for many (Matt. xx. 28). There He deals with the whole problem of life and death, and that is what John brings out.

What I am seeing here is this. John records what the Lord Jesus says, "Father . . . glorify thy Son, that the Son may glorify thee: even as thou gavest him authority over all flesh, that to all whom thou hast given Him, he should give eternal life" (John xvii. 1-2). "As the Father hath life in himself, even so gave he to the Son also to have life in himself: and he gave him authority to execute judgment, because he is a son of man" (John v. 26-27). Here is sonship brought out in a third aspect; and in this He comes immediately into vital relationship with mankind. The Son of Man is a racial title—it speaks of relatedness to man. But how does He find man?—in death. How is He to redeem man?



—as the Redeeming Kinsman, the Son of Man. How is He to exercise the authority which He has been given to raise man from the dead? He will lay down His life, He will let go His own right, He will yield up His own claims, He will set His own personal interests aside, He will die for that which He has come to redeem. "I am the good shepherd . . . I lay down my life for the sheep." The Son of Man redeems. How?—in that infinite wisdom of the Cross; "Christ crucified . . . the wisdom of God" (I Cor. i. 23-24); that infinite wisdom of laying down the life, of letting go. That woman let go what was her right. The Lord Jesus, "existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being

made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 5-8). In that letting go, He redeemed us unto God, He saved the flock. Solomon was very wise; it is a beautiful story, very impressive; but he could not do this—he could not go right out into that vast realm of redeeming kinship with a whole race, and, on the principle of becoming obedient unto death, redeem the race. That is the greatness of Christ. Son, Eternal Son in Sovereign Kingship, Son as Redeeming Kinsman. Paul opens that up to bring the Church right into the full stature of a man in Christ—but that is another subject.

T.A.S.

## "Windows Open Toward Jerusalem"

*"And when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house (now his windows were open in his chamber toward Jerusalem); and he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforesaid"* (Dan. vi. 10).

THE key to this verse, and indeed to the whole chapter, is that little parenthesis—"his windows were open in his chamber toward Jerusalem."

These chapters of Daniel are not in chronological order. Chapters vii and viii both come before chapter v, and then after chapter v comes chapter ix which occurred in the first year of Darius. Chapter vi, although it does not say so, clearly occurred after the first year of Darius: there was an order of things already in the realm, there was a relationship between Darius and Daniel, there were enmities which must have taken time to mature: so that chapter vi follows chapter ix, and chapter ix explains the open windows.

### A Revelation of God's Purpose

Daniel had a revelation from God. Chapter ix tells us how he humbled himself before God over the state of God's people and of God's city, and how from heaven there came illumination, and Daniel, with the eyes of the spirit, saw the Divine purpose in its immediate effect (for Jerusalem was to be rebuilt) and in its larger, fuller and final outworking—the day when the people of God and the city of God should indeed be a praise to Him, all transgression forever finished, everlasting righteousness brought in, all the prophecies fulfilled, and God's dwelling-place with men. Daniel

saw that; he was able to enter into God's purpose concerning His people; and, whether his windows had been open before that or not, from that day onward they were open—the windows that looked toward Jerusalem—and Daniel made it the persistent, continual, purposeful exercise of his heart to get down before those open windows and pray for God's purposes.

### Daniel's Committal to God's Purpose

The opening of the windows was a symbolic act. It meant that he was committed to God and to that to which God was committed; he was with God for that which God intended to do; and the open windows were, humanly speaking, his undoing. Other people saw him at the open windows and realised that here was a trap, a way by which they could ensnare him. And that is, as I understand it, the setting for this chapter vi—not a young man, but the old servant of the Lord, being faced with two alternatives, either to close his windows and leave off pursuing this utter attitude of co-operation with God, or else to go into the lions' den.

### The Enemy's Antagonism

Of course, as far as the story goes, it was just the hatred of men and a convenient way of getting rid of him. But we know that there are spiritual lessons in it, and that it always happens like this—that heavenly revelation, and the committal of the heart utterly to the Lord for its fulfilment, provoke an assault which is meant either to make us desist or to destroy us.

Earlier on, Daniel's companions had been in

a similar position with regard to the fiery furnace; but for them it was a matter of whether they were on the Lord's side or not. If they were on the Lord's side, well then, the fiery furnace; if they wanted to avoid the fiery furnace, they must break with the Lord. And we know, and Daniel knew, how the Lord delivered. We all know something of that as Christians. So soon as we are truly on the Lord's side we meet, as they met, an antagonism which calls upon us either to desist or to know the fiery furnace.

I think this experience of Daniel's marks a step in advance of that. This was not for him a question of whether he was the Lord's or not. He could have closed his windows, he could have desisted from this which was the cause of his being thrown into the lions' den, without breaking with the Lord; in the quietness of his own heart, in the seclusion of his own room, he could have prayed. It was not now the question of whether he was the Lord's or not, but the question of an utter position in the light of heavenly revelation, or of desisting from that. It is always so. That is the treatment that we may expect if we too have seen something of what God is desiring and intending to do, and have given Him our hearts and our hands that we are with Him for it.

### **The Delivering Power of the Heavenly Vision**

But the message of this verse to my own heart lies here—in such conditions, in the midst of that bitter assault and antagonism, how did Daniel behave? What a lesson for us all! When he knew, he just went on praying toward Jerusalem. It did not make the slightest difference to him. It was not that he suddenly opened the windows—the windows were open; not that he suddenly began to pray—he had been praying and giving thanks three times a day toward Jerusalem. All the threats and fury of the adversary made not the slightest difference to him. Without any sense of strain: without any screwing of himself up and suddenly getting into a tense condition over it all: in quiet, noble dignity, he went on with the Lord. How important for us to be ready for the assault when it comes! I think one of the reasons why Daniel was so steady and calm under it all was that his revelation was something so much bigger than himself that it carried him through. What I mean is that if Daniel had seen Jerusalem being rebuilt and himself a kind of Nehemiah of Zerubbabel taking the lead: if his vision, while being of Divine things, had brought himself into prominence: well, the lions' den

would have been a first-class problem. How could the vision be realised if he went into the lions' den? And that is the disturbing feature in our spiritual lives—that so often, when God reveals Divine things to us, we somehow manage to introduce ourselves into the picture. A certain thing is going to happen, and we are going to have a part! and all too subtly we begin to see ourselves having a prominent place in the realisation of it. Then, when the assault comes upon the revelation, and upon us because of it, we are disturbed, we are worried. But Daniel was not going back to Jerusalem, though, as we find, he was told that he should have his place in the end (Dan. xii. 13); so far as he was concerned, he forgot himself, he was nothing. The people of God and the city of God, and the purpose of God in that people and city—they were what he saw when he opened the windows. Excuse me putting it this way—it was not a mirror he went to pray in front of, it was an open window. He did not see himself as the chief feature; he saw (though no human eye could see it at that distance) the city of God, he saw the Divine purposes. What did the lions' den matter to them? What did it matter what men did to Daniel so long as that end was realised? In the light of what God had shown him, he could not stop praying for Jerusalem, and, what is more important, he could not stop giving thanks for Jerusalem.

We need a little imagination to put ourselves in his place. When he knew that the writing was signed, what did he do? Begin to pray for Daniel? No, that is what Darius did. Daniel gave thanks that Jerusalem was going to be rebuilt. Oh, the delivering power of a vision big enough, heavenly enough, Divine enough to swallow up all our little petty and personal interests! That is the secret—the open windows. Dear brother, dear sister, look out to God's purpose! Of course, if you do, it will involve the lions' den. What did Daniel care for the lions' den? When he had heard all about it, he just went home, went on praying, went on thanking God.

### **The Futility of Earthly Endeavour**

I like to compare Darius with Daniel. Darius was supposed to be the king, but Daniel was the man reigning in spirit. What a bad time Darius had! and that does not express to us the bad time that evil people have, but the bad time that the well-intentioned man has, who is concerned for the interests of the Lord without really knowing the Lord. It was to Darius' credit that he was so moved and terribly anxious. You notice what it says: this shows the difference of attitude: Darius, when he

had been tricked into this experience, "was sore displeased, and set his heart on *Daniel* to deliver him." That is a good enough, reasonable enough, sincere enough exercise. "He set his heart on Daniel to deliver him." And what happened? "He labored till the going down of the sun to rescue him," but all his labour did not make the slightest difference to the lions' den; nor did it make the slightest difference to the Divine deliverance when it came. You can imagine those men who were the means of bringing Daniel into the lions' den. How they enjoyed the problem, the dilemma in which Darius was! He laboured, but they outwitted him; he tried in vain to think how he could outwit them and express his power, and they laughed at him. And the devil laughs at us when we are in the position that Darius was in. And, while the Lord did not laugh at him—I am sure the Lord appreciated the good that lay behind it all—He would have said to Darius, Don't trouble, you are wasting your time, I can manage without you.

Then the night came and the matter seemed irrevocable. What a night the king had, the restlessness, the bitterness, the disappointment! Bring him food—he doesn't want food; music?—he cannot listen to music; sleep?—he cannot sleep. What a night! While Daniel, down among the lions, was having a nice, peaceful, quiet night! Which things are a parable. Daniel or Darius? I am afraid I am often Darius. Darius was a man of the earth, Daniel was a man of heaven. When you are a man of the earth and when you face Divine things as here on earth, that is the kind of condition you work yourself into. Darius was frantic, strained to breaking point. He wanted to deliver the Lord's interests and he laboured and he fought and then he broke his heart because he felt all the Lord's interests were in the lions' den. He tried to meet the enemies of the Lord's interests on their own level. They plotted—he tried to counter-plot; they had exercised their power—he sought the means for overruling with *his* power; he was wrestling with flesh and blood, and he was losing and he was suffering. "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood" (Eph. vi. 12). When Daniel knew that the decree was signed, he did not set his heart to deliver Daniel. He did not labour till the going down of the sun to try and find a way out. Daniel went on looking to Jerusalem, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding kept his heart and mind. But Darius, with the best of intentions, was struggling and striving and trying to do something to help the Lord, and he only succeeded in working

himself into a state of restlessness and strain that are beyond description.

What is the secret? Surely it is as I have said—Darius was concerned for Daniel, for the human side, for the servant of the Lord—a very good concern in his case, because quite unselfish—but it did not help. Daniel was not concerned for the servant of the Lord, he was concerned for the interests of the Lord, for the heavenly revelation, and the result was that he was kept in perfect peace while Darius was worked up into a fever and a fret.

Well now, let the Lord apply the message and the lesson to each of our hearts. How does it work out with us? Are we on earthly ground or on heavenly?

### The Devil's Seeming Triumph

The devil seems rather to be limited in his ability to foresee the deliverances of God. He thinks—and indeed it looks as if he is right—that he can engineer situations in which there are only two alternatives; it was so with the three young men, it was so with Daniel, and in His time it was so with our blessed Lord. Two alternatives face the servant of God. Either he must relinquish the vision or he must be destroyed; and having, like some diabolical chess-player, engineered a situation from which there are only two possible moves, Satan stands back. In either case, he is triumphant. If those three young men will avoid the fiery furnace at the expense of denying the Lord, the devil does not mind their going free—they have denied the Lord, the spiritual interest is marred. Daniel can, if he will, save himself from the lions' den, he can close his windows, he can relinquish that utter position of abandonment to the heavenly revelation; he can—and alas many do—avoid the lions' den. It can be done, and Satan has triumphed either way; and that is the diabolical ingenuity of it. It is a cleft-stick. Either we must relinquish that utter position concerning that which the Lord has shown us, or Satan will break us, he will finish our usefulness, he will mar our lives. So we have to sit down with the two alternatives.

### God's Counter by Resurrection

But the devil is limited, happily. There are not really only two ways, there is a third way. The young men proved it, Daniel proved it. In the case of our Lord, and in New Testament language, it is Resurrection. The word used in Daniel is "deliverance." There is a third way; the young men may not have known about that, Darius did not know about it. Did Daniel know? I wonder. Neither he nor the three young men stopped to think when the



alternatives were placed before them. They did not take any time to decide, they were committed to the Lord; what happened to them was a secondary thing. Yet I think Daniel did know. He knew in the way in which we may all know. He could not foresee the way in which God would deliver him. That is what we want to know—we want the Lord to explain, we want that somebody else should have gone the same way, and nobody has gone that way before: it always is to us as a new experience, we cannot see the way out. Nor could Daniel in that sense; but spiritually he could see that his association with the Lord was the safe way, and though with his mind he could not understand, with his spirit he knew that to be on the Lord's side was the safe way, and that is why there is this air of quiet calm about him. He did not see the way out, but he did know the Lord; so he would open his windows and pray and praise.

“Is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?” Well, let the next morning and the light of day show, and the king shall see there are not just the two alternatives. That is what the devil thinks—maybe even persuades himself. That is what man thinks as he looks at it from a human level. That is what we shall think unless we have the windows open toward Jerusalem. Two alternatives—either we must compromise in this matter of utter abandonment to what the Lord has shown to be His will, or we shall be broken—one or the other. If we say, in any case I cannot abandon what the Lord has shown, my heart is set upon Him: we shall find that there is a third way. There is the vision, and there is deliverance. Thank God, that is true for us, He is the God of resurrection, the God of deliverances. So let us keep the windows open.

### A Great Victory

See what happened as the result of this. There is always spiritual gain when we are faithful to the Lord. Daniel heard all their threats, knew what was going to happen, foresaw it all, and quietly went on with the Lord. That is all Daniel did, but you see the extraordinary results. This experience of his was a

great victory. Without feeling revengeful about men, we must feel there is a certain spiritual satisfaction at the end of the story in the fact that the ones who had plotted Daniel's overthrow were cast into the den themselves; and the spiritual lesson is a true one. Daniel's quiet faithfulness and his deliverance were not just things in themselves, they were the overthrow of the enemies of the Lord. It was a great victory. And it is always like that. Daniel did not wrestle and strive. He did nothing concerning his enemies; he kept his windows open to Jerusalem. But so long as he did that, God was quite capable of dealing with his enemies. Let the rest, the quiet, the calm dignity of that assurance flood our hearts. Darius was trying to deal with the enemies and could not; Daniel was holding fast to the Lord and his steadfastness was the undoing of all his enemies.

### “The God of Daniel”

And the second feature which emerges from this story is the great testimony to the Lord which was set up because of Daniel. The book of Daniel has a number of titles of God which are very striking, and some of them very wonderful. He is the “living God”; He is the “God of heaven”; He is the “Ancient of days”; and so on. But come to chapter vi. 26, and He is “the God of Daniel.” In all that list of glorious titles, here is one more—“the God of Daniel.” What a testimony! It is not that Daniel stands for anything; but what makes the King and all others to marvel is, What a God Daniel has! Would that that might be added to the many titles of the Lord, with my name and yours in the place of Daniel's! We are not important, but nor was Daniel in his own eyes.

Our windows open toward Jerusalem, our going on with the Lord, mean the lions' den; but we go on with the Lord, and after all we come out of the lions' den and there is a great victory, something established in the earth that never was before of a testimony to the greatness of the glory of God. “The God of Daniel.” The Lord grant that this may be true in our case.

H.F.

## “He That is Spiritual”

### III

#### The Church in the Spiritual Realm

**A**LTHOUGH we have said a great deal about spirituality, and that as to the new man and our spirit, I have not failed to recognise that all this is perfectly meaningless

unless we know the Holy Spirit Himself. I trust that no one will have the impression that we are talking about our spirits only; everything is *His* working, everything depends upon *Him*, and it is by *Him* that spirituality, in the Divine sense, is possible. It is very necessary always to honour the Holy Spirit. We, under

His government and direction in all things, and recognising His Lordship, are having to consider the matter of our own measure of spiritual life and nature, because that is a tremendously important thing, as I think we have been seeing.

In our previous meditations we were occupied with the general principle of spirituality, going on to the personal and inward reconstituting through new birth of spiritual men and women. Then we went on from the centre to the circumference of spiritual effectiveness, and saw where spirituality has its supreme registration—that is, in the realm of spiritual powers back of all things seen, the spiritual forces which are at work and which have to be met and countered—and there it is that our spiritual measure is tested and found out, when we are really up against a Satanic situation.

### God's Mind About the Church

Now we are coming to what is intermediate to these two, between the centre of the personal reconstituting, and the outermost bound of its effectiveness and value. What lies between those two is corporate testimony, which has to do with the Church and the churches. In the Divine scheme of things it is the Church which is the intermediary, that which stands between and has the ultimate effect in the spiritual realm. I mean that individual Christians, though they may be born again, as individuals will not get very far in touching that outermost realm of spiritual forces. There, a real registration has to be a corporate one. It will be the Church eventually which will be the instrument of Divine government in this universe. So it is necessary for us to spend a few minutes with the Church before we come to the churches; and of course we are continuing to keep before us the matter of spirituality. Here spirituality means what the Church is *in God's mind*. When we come to contemplate the Church in its wholeness and entirety, of course, we come mainly to the letters to the Ephesians and to the Colossians. There we find God's mind about the Church. We must realize the necessity for our seeing and apprehending what the Church is in God's mind, not as we find it in the churches, not as it actually is here; and we must stand on that ground, or we shall be helpless in this matter of spiritual impact. I mean that if we are going to accept what we find in the New Testament as to the churches as being the expression of all there is, we are very soon going to give up the fight, and shall not get very far. Dr. Campbell Morgan has remarked that there is often heard the word—Oh, let us get back to the New Testament church! But, he said, God

forbid!—and went on to say that you will look a long way to-day for a Christian church that will wholly correspond in its defects to the church in Corinth. When you come to think of it, there is some truth in that. A church in which there is incest and all that you find in Corinth!—God forbid that we get back to the New Testament church if that is it! God forbid that we should say that we have made no progress from that! If we are going to accept that as the standard, we are going to be crippled, and the measure of our spirituality will be very small indeed, and therefore the measure of our impact likewise. The Apostle who was mainly responsible for these churches coming into being repudiated their condition, would not accept it, was fighting against it. Why? Because he had seen God's mind; that was his position, his vantage ground, his strength. If he had never seen God's mind and only saw this, what a disheartened, disappointed, despairing man he would be! He had seen God's mind about it.

It is the Church that is in view in these epistles, and spirituality in Ephesians and Colossians means first of all an inward revelation of God's mind about the Church. It is a tremendous thing for spiritual strength, for spiritual power, for spiritual ministry, for spiritual impact, for spiritual food—yes, for every spiritual value—to have really had a heart revelation of God's mind about the Church; not simply to have studied Ephesians and Colossians, but for it to have broken in upon your heart, to have seen it in an inward way. I say that is spirituality with an impact, it is spirituality with a dynamic; and what a dynamic it is! Look at the Apostle. He looks out at the end of his life over the churches. He knows them intimately; and he has to say—“all that are in Asia have turned away from me” (II Tim. i, 15): they have repudiated Paul to whom, under Christ, they owed everything. He looks out; and what a spectacle, what a heartbreak! And the man in his circumstances of imprisonment and isolation and limitation, looking out on that, might well have died of a broken heart, or have sunk down into the uttermost despair and written his life off as a failure, and all his work as for well-nigh nothing. But this man is not down there, he is in triumph, he is delivered, he is saved, he is emancipated from all that. The facts are true and real, and yet he is triumphant. Why? Because he sees God's mind about the Church and he knows that, if God ever had a mind about a thing, He is going to have the thing like that; and, no matter what appearances say, in the end God will have His Church like that. God has not con-

ceived a thing and projected it, to be cheated of it. There it is and it will be!

When you have grasped that, you are able to get closer to these letters and see the value of spirituality in general and in particular. In general, like that. A true spiritual apprehension is an emancipating thing. The spiritual is not the unreal, it is the most real of all. It is far more real than the temporal and visible. The eternal—they are the real things. You do not see this Church here on the earth; it is not seen, but it is there in the unseen with God, and it is the eternal thing. If only we saw the invisible—that is an extraordinary statement, “he endured as seeing him who is invisible” (Heb. xi. 27)—if only we saw the invisible, meaning if only we saw in the spirit what can never be seen in the flesh with our natural eyes, it would be a tremendously emancipating thing, because we should see that that is the eternal thing that must be. When all else passes, that will be. Spirituality buoys you up. There is so much disappointment in the churches, in the things seen, that you might give up in disgust, close down your work and go and do some other job; but you do not do that if you have really seen. You may tell yourself that you are a fool not to face facts, that you are simply putting on blinkers, not taking account of realities; but because of something that God has done inside you cannot accept that, you must go on. You cannot accept the total ruin theory, if you have had a revelation.

### The Timelessness of the Church

Then this revelation of the Church works out in particular matters, and you can see why the revelation is such a power when you come to look at these letters. You find, first of all, that spirituality as to the Church relates in particular to its eternity, or, if you like, its timelessness, for the Apostle, by the Spirit, in his letter to the Ephesians almost immediately lights upon that. This is not something which has been brought into being at some point in time. “He chose us in him before the foundation of the world”: “foreordained”: it goes back to a dateless point outside of time. He sees the past eternity linked with the future eternity, unto the ages of the ages. He lifts the Church right out of time and puts it where no time is, and says it has come out of that past and goes on to this future. And when you get it out there, something is going to happen. It must be, time cannot make any difference. If this were something that we created or raised up, something of mushroom growth or simply of our lifetime, started with us and finished with us, well, it is not worth the cost. Here the Apostle sees beyond the

temporal aspects of the Church, and says that the Church according to God's thought is a timeless thing. So far as we are concerned, we have no date for its beginning and there is no date for its end. Of course, we cannot explain that, but there is the fact stated—and that is spirituality. The Church is in eternity, it is timeless. And when it is established with God outside of time, what can alter it? It must be! It is with God; God comes out of eternal purpose to secure in time something which is eternal; not something that belongs just to the “now” of time, but in time an eternal thing is secured. How difficult, how impossible, it is to speak of these things! God coming out of eternal purpose, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ before the world was—there is something so strong about that, so settled, so fixed, so irrevocable.

Here, in this connection, is the principle of the Holy Spirit's foreknowledge and sovereignty. I can quite understand that you must have some kind of Calvinism. You may not go all the way, you may have serious reservations, but you have to have a place for something of the principle of it, because here it is. God is coming into time to secure an eternal thing according to foreknowledge and predestination, and if you want a simple explanation and application of that, listen to what the Lord said to the Apostle about Corinth. “Fear not, Paul . . . I *have* much people in this city” (Acts xviii. 10). Not—“I am going to have”; “I have”—before they were all saved. This shows the Spirit coming out in foreknowledge and sovereignty, so that, if He gets hold of an instrument which He can really direct, He knows to what He will direct that instrument. You see the outworking of this principle of foreknowledge and sovereignty in the life of this man Paul. “They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden of the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; and when they were come over against Mysia, they essayed to go into Bithynia; and the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not” (Acts xvi. 6-7); and then the Divine intervention, Europe, Philippi. Why? We do not know why, we can only surmise. Asia is not ready, Bithynia's time has not come. Over here they are ready, there will be a response. The Spirit knows, He has foreknowledge and is acting sovereignly in relation to eternal knowledge, and the thing proves right. You see the working of this. God is not working on haphazard chances, as if He said, Just go here and see if there is anything. That is not God. It may seem like that with us, but that is not God. He knows; He has



come out of eternity, and a really Spirit-led ministry is almost romantic in touching need just at the time when it is ready to be touched. At any rate, that is the romance of the New Testament. The Spirit says to Philip in Samaria, "Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza" (Acts viii. 26). He goes, not knowing why. But in the foreknowledge of God there, just at that time and place, is a man, and he is just ripe, and the Lord makes a contact. God is moving out of eternal purpose, this is not just chance. But here is a tremendous principle, and you can see the operation of the law of spirituality so far as the Church is concerned, that God is working out of eternal purpose, securing an objective in time. It is something so solid, so strong. I know all the mysteries and all the problems bound up with that, but here is the fact, that God is not just working from hand to mouth. He is working with a complete foreknowledge. The Church, in God's mind, existed before its first member was born, and He knew every member before that first member was born. I say it is a strong thing for our lives, if we have seen something like that.

Of course, this does not do away with preaching, or with seeking souls, or with terrible conflict over souls. All the same, we have to come under the Spirit's hand to seek them. We have to go and preach, and very often preach at large, and not know what God has got there. It has to be done in faith, and very often we have to enter into, and go through, a terrible conflict; and yet Divine sovereignty is still the same. We might think that with Divine sovereignty working out of eternal purpose the thing will happen in any case. Ah no, it will not. We have to preach, travail, battle, seek. These two things are not contradictory, they are complementary.

### **The Heavenliness of the Church**

We now turn to a second thought in the Divine mind concerning the Church as we find it in these letters—its essential heavenliness from God's standpoint. In the letter to the Ephesians the constant repetition is "in the heavenlies in Christ." We must seek to dismiss our natural, soulical mentality about that. I am not saying that there is no such place as a geographical heaven, but we must rule out that kind of mentality of geography, and realise that "in the heavenlies" is a spiritual principle first of all before it is anything else, and that, while it may mean that Christ is in a certain geographical location, yet spiritually it signifies a realm altogether outside of this world order. You know quite well that two people

can be side by side, as close as two can be, and yet they may be in absolutely different realms. That is the principle of heavenliness; it refers to a different spiritual realm altogether. True, it is above, elevated, higher, but that is spiritual first of all before it is anything else. It is a spiritual difference on an altogether higher level of Divine thought—not of this order, not, as we say, earthbound; it is heavenly, it is in a spiritual sense in the heavenlies in Christ. Well, of course, that does not want explaining. You can sit in your chair and be in the heavenlies. Sometimes we sit here, and at the same time we are a long way off. I do not mean we are dreamy, but we are having a good time with the Lord, we are really in our consciousness far away. I am not talking about the psychic now, but the real spiritual enjoyment of the Lord so that we forget the people around us; we are, to all intents and purposes, somewhere else. That is a commonplace thing in spiritual life, or I hope it is, with us. It is a heavenly thing from God's standpoint, and it is dynamic when we have really seen it. When really it has come home to us in the power of the Holy Spirit it is dynamic, because it results in tremendous things in us first of all. Oh, what that revelation has done with some of us! When ours was an earthly conception of the Church, how we were engrossed with its ecclesiasticism, its forms and procedure! The whole system of things meant a lot to us. Then God broke in with His conception of the Church as a heavenly thing, and all this fell from us like a mantle; it went, and from that time to this we have felt how futile and petty it all is. But that does not happen until you have seen in your heart; and I beg of you, do not go and do things merely because you hear these things said. Ask the Lord for the revelation. Do not come out of the earthly thing until God has broken in upon you as to His heavenly thing. "Come-out-ism" only makes trouble for God as well as for man. Once you see God's mind about the Church as a heavenly thing it is emancipating, it makes tremendous challenges within and without and puts you in a place of being able to minister in a way that meets need, brings in heavenly fulness, and God comes through. In a word, it results in spiritual increase to have really seen the heavenly nature of the Church. This matter of what heavenliness is in the Church could occupy us for a long time.

### **The Universality of the Church**

One further matter. God's conception of the Church, or spirituality, here in Ephesians concerns not only its timeliness, and its heavenliness, but its universality. How com-

prehensive is God's thought! In our earlier messages we have sought to show how comprehensive Christ Himself is, embodying in His own Person everything, in no way being just partial but gathering everything up into Himself, and yet standing right outside of everything. Christ, so great that no nation that has ever been, or is, or will be, will find Him unsuitable, inapplicable, but with all their differences, national traits and temperaments and constitutions, will find in Him, every one of them, the answer to their needs. He embraces all nations, He is the desire of all nations. And within nations, all the different features which mark separate individuals find their answer in Him. How comprehensive He is, how vast, and yet how different! Yes, He meets the need of the Jew, but He is not a Jew essentially; He meets the need of the Greek, but He is not a Greek essentially; He meets the need of all the Gentiles, but He is not a Gentile essentially. As Son of Man, He meets every need of every nation and tribe, and yet He is not of any one of them. No one can say—He belongs exclusively to us. You cannot find that the Jews say that Christ belonged exclusively to the Jews; He would repudiate that, and you know quite well that you dare not portray Him like that. Tisso, the great Scripture artist, when he painted his pictures on the life of Christ, painted all the figures around Christ in their particular national and local distinctiveness. A Roman was obviously a Roman in his pictures, a Jew was obviously a Jew, and so on; you do not have to be told that this man is a Jew, and that man is a Roman. When he came to Christ, he dare not give any such distinctiveness. He dare not paint him as a Jew nor as a Roman. Christ would lose His real value to all nations if you gave Him a distinctively national feature and character. He has to be portrayed in some way that is both a combination of all and yet different from all; and that was Tisso's problem which he tried to solve in that portrait. But, of course, portraiture is always a dangerous thing. My point is this, that Christ does embody all, and yet He is outside of all. There is a universality about Him which gathers up all need and meets it, and yet is greater than it and different from it.

And His Body is constituted according to Himself. You cannot have an English church, a Chinese church, an Indian church, a Jewish church, a Gentile church. You cannot; it is an utter violation of the Divine conception of the Church to have anything like that. The Church, according to God's mind, is universal, it is a different kind of thing altogether from what is of the earth, and yet all will find their

need met there. They will come from the East and from the West, from the North and from the South, and they will find their spiritual need met in the true Church, but not in a national "church," an earthly thing, a local thing. Oh, that it might be more like that to-day! That is the Divine conception, that is spirituality, and the apprehension of that is the way to real power, impact, value, effectiveness. If we have even a small approximation to that in the churches, then proportionately we achieve spiritual effectiveness and value.

### **Spirituality in the Churches**

So much for the Church. When we come to the churches, we come to what the Church is actually—not as it is according to God's mind, but actually, and then spirituality has to be recognised along the line of formation into what is according to God's mind. Spirituality is the law of formation where things are imperfect. Coming to Corinth, what is the Apostle's word? "I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual" (I Cor. iii. 1). That is only saying in other words, The reason for your present condition, which is a deplorable one, is the absence of spirituality. Then we begin to look into the whole letter and see the marks of the absence of spirituality: We find that Corinth sets forth the great importance of certain spiritual things.

### **The Importance of Spiritual Insight**

Firstly, the great importance of spiritual insight and knowledge for discrimination. One of the great causes of the condition there was an inability to discriminate, a mixing up of things which should never be confused but should stand far apart, belonging to two different realms altogether. That lack of the spiritual faculty for discrimination resulted in this awful condition. Let us see some ways in which that inability to discriminate operated.

#### **(a) In Discriminating Between the Natural and the Spiritual**

Firstly, it had to do with the difference between the natural (or the soulical, as it truly is in the Word) and the spiritual; the world, on the one hand, and the heavenly order and standards on the other. They were mixing up world standards with heavenly standards—note all that is said in I Cor. i and ii about the wisdom and the power of this world. They were very much interested in the matters of wisdom and power. They desired to gain ascendancy, to be in a position of influence; and their idea of ascendancy and influence and power was the worldly idea, the wisdom of the rulers of this world. They were therefore evidently indulging in studies of the

philosophies of the Greeks, systems of thought and interpretation of the universe. They were thinking that, if you advanced enough in this wisdom, you would get to the heart of things, you would solve all problems, and come into a place of competence and power and influence. They could not discriminate between the wisdom of this world and the wisdom of God, and so the Apostle writes to them such things as these—"The world through its wisdom knew not God" (i. 21). "God's wisdom . . . which none of the rulers of this world hath known; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (ii. 7-8). "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?" (i. 20). These people were unable to discriminate. This all seems to us very elementary. How far back they must have been!

And the same with power. They were after strength and power, and they were going to have it on the world's line. So he says, "Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (i. 24). But—in substance he adds—you cannot see it, you cannot discriminate. You notice what he is saying about discerning, judging—that word so difficult of translation. "He that is spiritual judgeth" (discerneth, examineth) "all things, and he himself is judged of no man" (ii. 15)—he is inscrutable. The spiritual is inscrutable to the natural. These people were not able to discriminate, hence this confusion. Spiritual discernment and ability to discriminate between things that differ but which often seem to be very alike is a tremendous thing to bring the Church to God's idea of the Church. We do need spiritual discernment and understanding in the Church, to save the Church from its present deplorable state. You know how true that is, how very few Christians have real discernment. It is an essential spiritual factor to bring the Church to God's idea of the Church; without it, you get the Corinthian condition.

#### (b) In Recognizing Relatedness of All Ministries in the Body

Secondly, in the relationship and the appraisal of Christ and His servants. "I could not speak to you as unto spiritual." Why? Well, "there are divisions among you," and those divisions are of this kind—"Each one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ"—making parties; and the failure here was their inability to see that the Body is one, with Christ as its Head, and that if there is a Paul ministry or an Apollos ministry or a Peter ministry that they liked so much and preferred above others, it is only the ministry

of a member of the Body and not something in itself, detached. The hand has a function in the body and you cannot take it over there in a corner. You dare not detach any member of the body and circle round that. If you do, you have no conception of the body and you have no conception of Christ. That is what these people needed to see, and had not the spirituality for seeing. This Body is one, these servants of God are members of the Body functioning in their own appointed ways, and they are all essential, they all make up one Body, and Christ is that Body. "So also is the Christ" (I Cor. xii. 12). But the Corinthians were, in effect, tearing the Body to pieces and making a church round one member of the Body. "There are divisions among you." Spirituality in this case sees the oneness and wholeness of the Body, and any particular ministry not as something apart and detached, to be taken up and circled round and made something of in itself, but a contributory factor to the whole, which the rest can no more do without than it can do without the rest. It sees the relatedness in the Body of all its functions, its ministers, and its ministries, that they are one and all interdependent. Failure to see that results in chaos in the Church. You would not have had half of what there is to-day in the divisions of Christendom if there had been a spiritual apprehension of the Body of Christ. Wherever it is corporately found, you will be coming back to the Divine idea, and there will therefore be a spiritual power and spiritual fulness.

#### (c) In Discriminating Between Spiritual Gifts and Spiritual Persons

Thirdly, there was at Corinth the spiritual inability to discriminate between spiritual gifts and spiritual persons. In I Cor., if one thing is clear it is this, that spiritual gifts are not necessarily evidence of people being spiritual—that you can, in this real sense, be a very unspiritual person and have spiritual gifts. You will find that spiritual gifts may, and very often do, only relate to spiritual infancy, and not to spiritual maturity. The possession of such gifts may run side by side in the same life with very serious moral defects. This is a problem, this is startling. But it was so at Corinth. As in no other church, spiritual gifts are in evidence there: or, at any rate, are spoken of: and in no other church are there so many disorders—and worse than that. They could not see the difference between spiritual gifts and spiritual persons. Why should Paul head this whole matter of gifts right up into chapter xiii? What is the meaning of chapter xiii if it is not this? "If I



speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal." Is he suggesting an impossible thing? Is this a merely hypothetical conjecture which has no reality in life or experience—that a man can speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not love, and, being like that, be sounding brass or a clanging cymbal? Speaking with tongues—surely tongues are the ultimate thing, a great evidence of spirituality? Not at all! The supreme feature of spirituality is Divine love. God is love, and we are to be made perfect in love. "Faith which worketh by love" (Gal. v. 6)—this is maturity and this is spirituality. "I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual." So he heads this whole thing right up through gifts to love, which is spirituality. He says, I may have all these gifts, and yet may be an unspiritual person. The gifts may only be marks of my spiritual infancy. I am not saying that that is necessarily so. Paul said that he spoke with tongues more than they all. But spiritual gifts and spirituality do not necessarily go together—

that is the point. Spiritual maturity did not go hand in hand with their gifts at Corinth. They thought that the gifts meant much more than they did mean, that they were the evidences of great spiritual measure. They did not see. Let us come back to it—there is a difference between spiritual gifts and spiritual persons. The gifts—what are they? The result of the Spirit coming upon a person. The spiritual person—what is he? He is spiritual as the result of the Spirit forming within. There is a lot of difference between inward formation and merely outward action. Well then, in Corinth, spirituality meant a heavenly standard of wisdom and power; the Body as a unified whole; and spiritual measure inward more than spiritual gifts outward. That is spirituality. I ask you yourselves to go on with your New Testament looking for the marks of spirituality in these letters, and when you get them, you will be seeing the law by which the churches as they are can be changed into the Church as it is, that is, transformed into accord with the Divine thought. The transforming power is spirituality.

T.A.S.

## The Spiritual Clinic

### Spiritual Neurasthenia

**I**N the medical world this malady is described as "a condition of weakness and exhaustion of the nervous system, giving rise to various forms of mental and bodily inefficiency. The term covers an ill-defined, motley group of symptoms, which may be either general and the expression of derangement of the entire system, or local, limited to certain organs."

There is an almost appalling amount of this complaint about to-day, and a terrible prevalence amongst Christian workers. This is significant of a number of spiritual faults, to which we shall refer presently.

Before we deal with the spiritual side, it might be well and helpful if we said just a word about the natural in itself. This is one of those troubles so closely related to the mind that it forms peculiarly fruitful ground for the enemy.

For instance, apart from any spiritual factors, those who suffer from neurasthenia are subject to much depression, "low-spirits," and despondency; inability to perform the ordinary amount of mental work; loss of power of fixed attention so that, for example, a row of figures cannot be added up correctly, the dictating or writing of a few letters is a source

of worry, petty details are a painful effort. Sleeplessness is often, but not always, a characteristic. Sometimes sensations of pain, usually localised, are present—a joint, a muscle, a sinew, a limb, the skin, the eyes, etc.; sometimes marked vertigo, almost like meningitis. Certain other peculiar symptoms of this malady are specially interesting as they come so near to what also characterises supernatural or demoniacal cases.

For instance, in some cases there is a malicious delight in making people who are happier uncomfortable or miserable. Then a well-known symptom is the presence of a second something. When the mind is occupied—or straining to be occupied—with one thing, another thing or presence is shadowing the mental consciousness like a spectre. Then again, the intrusion of uncontrollable thoughts—thoughts foreign to the normal life, and often to the moral make-up, of the patient—cause intense distress. The desire to rush away and escape from everyone is very common, and also the tendency to fling oneself down in despair. Indeed, the symptoms are legion and vary with the degree or particular form of the complaint. We have only mentioned this much because it is possible to carry into the spiritual realm that which is not specifically spiritual, and relate either to the Lord or to the enemy

that which may be just the infirmity of this body of corruption. At least it is as well that we recognise this, and know that our case is in common understanding amongst those who know; for a very general element of this trouble is that the patient always feels that he is completely misunderstood by all.

### Confusion of Natural and Spiritual

When this distressing condition comes within the circle of God's people the enemy is especially active to give to it spiritual implications. What terrible distress there is abroad because of inability to concentrate the mind in prayer at once! What suffering because of depression which has been interpreted by the "accuser" as being the result of sin, thus setting up a false condemnation! What ravages by reason of that other presence being given a sinister character, as though the evil one had been given a right over one! What anguish because of those foreign thoughts! What lost assurance of salvation; sense of being beyond pardon; questioning the whole truth and reality of the Christian faith, etc., etc.!

Where shall we begin to help such afflicted ones?

First of all, let us say to all the Lord's people that in this realm we have one of the most serious warnings against living the Christian life in the realm of the soul instead of in the spirit. It would seem that the enemy would facilitate such "Christianity" to a tremendous degree. The mental, emotional,

and volitional engrossment in "spiritual" things apart from or beyond a true Holy Spirit energising will bring its own Nemesis, and the end may be despair.

"The mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the spirit is life and peace."

Thus we would say that what is truly of the Spirit abides and stands when all the realm of the soul (psychical nature) and body breaks down and contradicts.

Have you been truly born from above? Have you been obedient to the heavenly vision, to the light as you have had it? In failure and fall have you repentantly confessed, and done what could be done to bring forth fruit meet for repentance? Have you appealed to the efficacy of the Blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son? Have you kept short accounts with God when convicted of wrong? Then take your stand in your spirit, even against your own soul and body if needs be, and against all hell. Stand upon the fact that He in Whom you have put your trust is "greater than our heart."

Then, one word more. Keep your eyes outside. Refuse introspection, dwelling upon yourself, your condition, your feelings, your symptoms. Look not for hope in yourself. Seek no virtue in your own heart. Cease to expect any good of yourself, but remember that He is your righteousness, your surety, your acceptance with God, your merit, your Intercessor.

T.A.S.

## "God Hath Spoken"

### No. II

#### The All-inclusive Object

SO far we have been mainly negative in our approach to the "Letter to the Hebrews," albeit seriously so, and we shall find it necessary as we go on to constantly strike the note of what God's mind concerning His people is *not*.

In commissioning His servant Jeremiah the Lord said that his ministry would be twice as much corrective and destructive as it would be constructive (Jer. i. 10). This indicated how much there was to be got out of the way before God's end could be reached. It was like Nehemiah's "much rubbish" in the way of the constructive work later on. But the best way to the corrective is always the positive, that is, presenting the purpose of God as fully as possible.

So, then, that which governs everything here in this letter, as everywhere else in the New

Testament, is the believer's attainment unto

#### The Fulness of Christ

and the strongest warnings—with terrible examples—are given as to failure in this matter. The fatal weakness of so very much of the Church's work, both in its evangelism and in inside activity, is its failure to realise that God has never been satisfied with just having converts or adherents, but has considered it so important to bring such to spiritual full-growth as to make the abiding monument of Divine Revelation—the New Testament—ninety-nine per cent. a volume for Christians as to their spiritual life after conversion; this, first and foremost, is God's way of saying two things.

Firstly, that the end, apart from the attaining of which His eternal counsels would have broken down, is Christ *in fulness*, not in aspects alone. Secondly, that only a Church which has a large measure of Christ can ade-

quately and effectively fulfil the purpose of the evangel. There is far more of spiritual force to be overcome in and around this world than can be met by the novitiate Church or Christian. Only Christ in fulness can do this, and the measure of effectiveness will ever be according to the measure of Christ. That the "Letter to the Hebrews" has so fully to do with this matter is to be seen from the fact that—in principles—it embraces and comprehends the whole New Testament revelation and meaning, doctrinal and practical. Sit down with it and see if you cannot find in it the essence of "Romans," "Corinthians," "Galatians," "Ephesians," "Philippians," "Colossians" and "Peter." And does it not set the basis for the interrogation of the churches in the "Revelation"?

But to come more immediately to the inclusive object, just take the thought of fulness and read the letter through with this as your guide. When you have done so, and have recognised that it is this which governs all, then start again with this second thought; in what way is Christ revealed here as fulness for our apprehending and attainment? A third question will eventually arise; what adjustments are necessary if that attainment is to be realised? We will seek to answer these questions in order.

### Fulness—the Governing Object

God does not believe in either emptiness or partial occupation. This is clearly shown throughout the entire Scriptures. If at any given time He speaks in a particular way, on a particular line, and with a particular emphasis, it is only by way of building up to a whole and bringing all to completeness. This is the point in the first statement in this letter. God has in times past spoken in portions and ways, but all the portions and manners pointed to the whole, and eventually that whole is found to be Christ—His Son. He is not merely another way or form of speech, He is the sum and consummation of all. He has been implicit in all parts, but never complete in any one. All the parts were—in principle—aspects or features of Him. But fulness is not just the combination and co-ordination of the parts as types and figures, manners of speech. Rather is it the Divine *meaning* of all that has gone before. The fulness is spiritual, heavenly, eternal, not temporal, earthly and passing. This is a point which must make us pause and think again. Fulness will be found in the essential nature of God's thoughts, not in their symbolic representation. Thus sonship, when understood, is the greatest revelation ever given by God to man, and the greatest of all Divine

thoughts for man. So chapters one and two sum up all in sonship.

First there is the presentation of the Son.

He has been made heir of *all things*.

He was the instrument in the making of the ages.

He is the fulness of the revelation of God. He sustains all things in cohesiveness and being.

He accomplished purification of sins.

He sits at the right hand of God.

He is superior to the angelic orders.

He has inherited an ineffable name.

It is a presentation of Christ on two sides of His being, sonship in two connections—Son of God and Son of man. Only in Paul's letter to the Colossians (chap. i) and John's Gospel (chap. i) is there anything to compare with this as a presentation of the fulness and transcendence of Christ.

The point which we must now make sure of grasping is that, while fulness has ever been God's thought and intention for His creation, there has been no *possibility* of real spiritual fulness since the fall of man until Christ, the Son, was seated at God's right hand after His circuit of humiliation, suffering, death and resurrection. God *begins* from fulness, He does not work towards it. Only in experience does fulness progress, but it is really, in God's mind, working *back* to the initially fixed realisation in Christ. When the Son—the Divine standard of fulness—has been set before us, then sonship in relation to Him (not in Deity but as Son of man, chap. ii) is brought out as to the believing family. All family titles are used: "children," "brethren," "sons," and "God's House."

This not being a detailed exposition of the letter, very much must be left without comment, although it is so valuable. We are governed by one thought.

When the Son and the sons have been presented, and with them God's thought and intention of fulness as governing the creative work, especially in relation to "man" and "the son of man" (ii. 6), then the great and significant phrase is used "Partners in a heavenly calling." By this phrase we are precipitated into the whole object of this letter, its subject matter, and the crisis which it represents.

"The heavenly calling." What is it? The dominion over "the inhabited earth to come (whereof we are speaking)" (ii. 5).

a. Man, in the first place was intended for this, but he missed it or forfeited it.

b. Israel was a type of an elect people



with this as their destiny. *They* forfeited it (see chap. iii, etc.).

- c. The dominion has been fully secured in "the Son of man," Who is Son of God—"Thy throne, O God" (i. 8)—and Who is now "crowned with glory and honour." "And this inheritance" is for the Church.
- ii. But there are two factors of major importance.
- a. This "heavenly calling" is essentially heavenly and spiritual. It has no connection with this present earth excepting as to spiritual testimony.
- b. Its full realisation and fulfilment is "to come," it is future, after this age.

Let us look at these two things more closely. What is the aspect of this letter? It is entirely *upward!* See the heavenly references.

"Heavenly calling," iii. 1; "heavenly gift," vi. 4; "heavenly country," xi. 16; "heavenly Jerusalem," xii. 22; "heavenly things," viii. 5, ix. 23; "passed through the heavens," iv. 14; "higher than the heavens," ("high priest"), vii. 26; "throne of the Majesty in the heavens," viii. 1; "entered into heaven itself," ix. 24; "in heaven a better . . ." x. 34; "enrolled in heaven," xii. 23; "him that speaketh from heaven," xii. 25; "make to tremble the heaven . . ." xii. 26.

So, the Lord and everything of Him is looked at as from below. The counterpart of the whole Old Testament system is seen to be in heaven, and it was only a temporal representation of the heavenly and spiritual reality. Christ is in heaven, and all of our religious bonds with God are through Christ as there. Every bond with the earth is broken, even while we are walking on the earth. Christ in heaven takes the place of all earthly figures and representations in ritual. It is important to recognise that this letter was addressed—in the first place—to a people who for centuries had held the position of a people whom God had taken out of the world unto Himself, explaining their own nature and history in the light of Christianity, showing that even such a people may make their separation earthly and earth-bound. Everything here and now is essentially spirit, but it is shown that there can be a false spirituality, a pseudo-spirituality. It was thought by the Jews, as it is thought by multitudes of well-meaning Christians, that the performing of certain rites, the preserving of certain forms, the following of a certain ritual, the wearing of certain garments, the employment of certain instruments, language, tones; and, indeed, the recognition of a set of more

or less sentient accompaniments: if bathed in an atmosphere of reverence and solemnity, is spirituality. This letter in which we are meditating most definitely cuts clean in between soul (of which the above is the expression) and spirit (iv. 12). In effect its corrective is that when you have true spirituality you need none of the above; and, indeed, this is the age in which that has all given place to what is purely and solely spiritual. But you can have all that, and not be really spiritual people. The more truly spiritual you are the less you will be impressed by, or taken up with, these things. They will be to you like so much child's play. This can be proved by the fact that in the realms where ritual is the greatest the gap between personal knowledge of the Lord and ritual is also the greatest. Whereas a deep rich life in God is usually found where there is little or nothing of outward forms in the sense of a system of religion.

Let it be noted, as we close this chapter, that it is in this very realm and connection that the appeal, the warnings, the exhortations, and the argument of this letter lie. Not concerning Corinthian sensuality or worldliness or divisions; not the sins of Christians; but the immaturity, childhood (chap. v. 12 to chap. vi. 12) of those who, although "once enlightened," were in danger of having their spiritual life limited and frustrated by becoming conformed to a traditional and fixed earthly religious system which, although instituted by God at one time to serve in the lower classes of the school of the ages, has, with this age, been left behind, and *all* who are of this dispensation begin their spiritual life and education at an entirely different level, and with an entirely superior equipment.

This equipment is twofold, making for such transcendent possibilities and responsibilities: Christ in full revelation; not in types and symbols, but in living reality; actually Himself the Priest, the Sacrifice, the Altar, the Mercy Seat, the Tabernacle, the Holy of Holies, etc., etc.; and then the Holy Spirit given to make Christ, in all that He is, a living *inward* reality, so that we live in the good of all by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. But Christ is infinitely vaster and fuller than has ever been conceived by man, and the growing revelation and apprehension of Him by the energy of the Holy Spirit keeps the believer's life ever moving forward and growing, so that Christianity should never be a static system but an ever-expanding life. Hence the constantly recurring appeal, "Let us go on," "Let us . . . let us . . ."

T.A.S.

## For Boys and Girls

### Gospel Messages from the Antarctic (No. 3)

*"Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding" (Psa. xxii. 9).*

*"The Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding" (1 John v. 20).*

OUR explorers went to the Antarctic before aeroplanes were in common use, and every journey made over the ice and snow had to be on foot. Many hundreds of miles were covered during the expedition, often with much danger and suffering, and always with very hard labour and slow progress. In order to help with this part of the work a number of ponies and dogs were used—animals born in cold lands and therefore able to face the severe cold of the Antarctic. Each pony pulled one sledge, but the dogs worked several to a team, being harnessed in pairs one behind another and each team pulling a sledge. On the whole, the animals worked well, but they caused many difficulties which could have been avoided if only they had been wiser. But of course they were only animals and could not be expected to act as men. If the spirit of a man could have been put into them they might have behaved differently—they would have had a new "understanding"—but that could not be done. A horse must always be a horse, a dog can be nothing but a dog. In this there is a very important difference between them and ourselves, as we shall see presently. A human being need not always be *only* a human being; he or she can become a child of God, with an altogether new nature. So as we go on to see what those animals did, remember that it need not be with us as it was with them. "Be ye not as the horse."

You would scarcely believe how foolishly they acted at times. For example, it was a common habit of the ponies to eat the ropes and straps with which they were tied up, so that often the explorers would have to chase after a pony who had eaten himself free and wandered away. Then again, at the end of the day's journey one of the most necessary tasks of the tired driver in charge of a pony was to build a wall of snow blocks, to shelter the pony from the wind. As often as not, when the man was tucked up comfortably inside his tent he would hear noises from outside and would go out to find that the pony had kicked down his wall—for no reason at all—and the man would have to build it up again before he could return to his warm sleeping bag. And when he had returned the same thing might happen again! What a stupid

pony! "No understanding" indeed!

One pony, named "Christopher", gave endless trouble. There was always tremendous difficulty in harnessing him; and then he always refused to start. All the other ponies would set off with their sledges, but Christopher would not move. Then at last he would start off at a run, and on he would go as long as he thought fit, and nothing would make him stop. The poor driver had no option but to keep up with him as well as he could. When at length Christopher did stop nothing would make him start again until he chose—and then he would repeat the performance. It was of no use giving him orders—he had his own ideas, and these he followed. Again we say "No understanding"!

The dogs also had their troublesome ways. One of the least was that they were always fighting one another. Then, sometimes, when harnessed to the sledge after a night's rest, they would be very eager to be on the move, and the moment the order to start was given they would race off—but in the wrong direction. Away they would go, taking no notice of the frantic shouts of the driver, and much valuable time and strength would be wasted before at last they were persuaded to settle down steadily in the right direction. And if ever they saw a penguin anywhere near as they were travelling, they would at once turn off in its direction in the hope of catching it—and again time and strength were lost by the whole party. Well may we say again "No understanding"!

Now if you could have talked to those ponies and dogs and asked them why they were there, they would no doubt have replied, "We have come to help the explorers to reach the South Pole." They might have meant it quite sincerely, but think how they were doing it! At one time they were helping splendidly, and then by some stupid act giving needless trouble that greatly hindered progress. If only they had had a man's nature and understanding instead of an animal's, how much better they could have served!

Now I want you to think of Another who had a team—of men, not dogs—to be with Him in His work. The Lord Jesus when here on earth chose twelve disciples, who went everywhere with Him and to whom He sought to teach His ways. Most of them loved Him and no doubt tried to understand His mind and to do His will. But what mistakes they made! If you read Luke ix you will find one such failure. Two of the disciples who loved

Him most wanted to do a thing in anger which they thought would please Him, but He rebuked them saying "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." Their loyalty to Him was good, but the spirit in them was so different from His Spirit and they therefore could not feel as He felt—their "understanding" was more like that of the ponies and dogs of our story. We can almost hear the pain in His tones because of their foolishness when on another occasion He said to them: "Do ye not yet perceive, neither understand? Have ye your heart hardened? . . . Do ye not yet understand?" (Mark viii. 17, 21). I am sure that often His heart was pained by their folly; and yet how tenderly and patiently He dealt with them! How could they, being sinful men, understand and appreciate the Spirit of God in their Master? They thought and felt as sinful men, He thought and felt as the holy Son of God—and they were in a different world from Him, just as the animals of our story were in a different world from the explorers. But happily that was not the end of the matter. After their Master had died and risen again and ascended into heaven He sent His Spirit to them at Pentecost—you can read of it in Acts ii—and the Spirit of Jesus entered into them and they became entirely new men, so that everybody around was amazed at the change. Now they could think and feel as their Master Himself—they might have said, in the words of our text, "The Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding." They had received a new nature, the Holy Spirit had brought their Master *into* them—no longer merely *with* them—and had taken full possession of their hearts and lives; and they were glad to let Him do whatsoever He desired

in and with them. And it is remarkable how they began at once to understand the things of Christ which had previously been so difficult for them.

Thank God, you and I can have a similar experience—indeed we *must* do so if we are going to make any discoveries in the land called "In Christ" which we have set out to explore. If we follow our own ideas or rely upon our own understanding we shall make no advance whatever. *We must receive a new nature*—that is what the Lord Jesus meant when He said, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John iii. 3). And *we must allow that new nature to govern us in all things*, even when it leads us in ways which our own nature would not choose to follow. That is what the Lord meant when He said: "If any man would come after me let him deny himself . . . and follow me" (Matt. xvi. 24).

Have you been born again yet? If not, the Lord Jesus is ready at this moment to come into your heart if you will open it to Him—"to as many as received him to them gave he the right to become children of God" (John i. 12). Then if you are willing to follow Him humbly in all things, His Spirit will guide you step by step into all the truth, taking of the things of Christ and showing them to you. The one who yields to the Holy Spirit most will be the first to reach the "South Pole" of our exploring. Until our next talk together please often pray the following prayer:—

More about Jesus let me learn,  
More of His holy will discern;  
Spirit of Christ my teacher be,  
Showing the things of Christ to me.

G.P.

## Resurrection, the Hall-mark of Sonship

"And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" (Matt. xxvii. 46).

"And Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit*" (Luke xxiii. 46).

" . . . God hath fulfilled the same unto our children, in that he raised up Jesus; as also it is written in the second psalm, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*" (Acts xiii. 33).

"Who was declared (to be) the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead; even Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. i. 4).

"For unto which of the angels said he at

any time, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?*" (Heb. i. 5).

THE matter which is brought before us by these passages is more for meditation than for speaking about: it is something to dwell upon quietly and thoughtfully. I shall do little more than bring it before you with a few observations for further meditation on your part.

Going back to those passages in the Gospels, we have first of all the cry of desertion and forsakenness, and the term used by our Lord at that moment was "My God, my God . . ." In the next passage, we come to the last cry, the final cry of the Lord on the Cross, and the term used was "Father . . ." When the Lord Jesus rose from the dead, among the



first words that He spoke, as far as we can tell, were these: "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended unto the Father; but go unto my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God" (John xx. 17), bringing both of these cries from the Cross together. "My Father . . . my God"; "your Father . . . your God." Therein lies a whole wealth of wonderful spiritual truth.

In the first of those two cries—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" sonship has been suspended, it is not there; the cry is "My God." At the last cry, the battle is won; all that the former cry meant of sonship being obscured has been set aside. In perfect tranquility, peace, rest, it is now "Father"; sonship is back. Now it is "My Father and your Father, My God and your God." Both "God" and "Father" were eclipsed; but later it is "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

### Sonship in Resurrection in a Representative Man

There must, I think, have occurred to your minds at some time a difficulty over these passages—the passage from the second psalm, quoted in the New Testament: "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee": and ". . . declared to be the Son of God . . . by the resurrection from the dead." Probably the intellectual difficulty is this—was He not always the Son of God? What about the eternal Sonship? Was He not God's Son before the resurrection? If so, in what way is He Son in resurrection? What does it mean, "This day have I begotten thee"? These words quite evidently refer to His resurrection, and that is borne out without any question, I think, by the first and second chapters of the letter to the Hebrews. If you look at the context, there is no room for any doubt about it, that "this day" is the day of His resurrection, and on that day He was begotten and on that day He was called "Son." Where then is the difference? Was He not Son? If so, in what way is He Son in resurrection?

Let us say at once that the matter is altogether related to the first and the last Adam. The first Adam was called God's son in the genealogy—"Adam, the son of God" (Luke iii. 38). There is a sense in which the first Adam was the son of God, but there is a sense in which that sonship was never fully realised—all its meaning, all its potentiality, all the Divine intention, was never known. It was sonship on probation before determination. (You notice the marginal word in Rom. i. 4—

"determined the Son of God with power"). Well, the first Adam failed, and in him the whole race lost its sonship. As we so well know, in the Cross the Lord Jesus came into that position as representative of the whole race in Adam, to meet the final consequences of that lost sonship. Those consequences were known in that eternal period of unspeakable agony when there was the awful consciousness of what it means to be abandoned by God. By nature we are out of Christ, without God and without hope in this world, but we are not aware of it fully nor of the full extent of what it involves. In that phase of the Cross, the Lord Jesus was, so to speak, projected into the full realisation of that complete consciousness of what God-forsakenness really means, that which is the terrible, terrible destiny of all deliberate and conscious rejectors—to be rejected. There He stood in a relationship to lost sonship in its full and final meaning, and suffered the consciousness of being abandoned by God.

Well, having suffered that judgment, that consequence, and having carried all the agony of it to the extent that He died not by crucifixion but by the very disrupting of His soul and the breaking of His heart (for when the soldiers came to inspect they found He was dead already, while those crucified with Him were still alive)—when that was accomplished He came to the moment, shall we say the eternal moment, of consciousness that judgment was past, it was all borne, and He could return and use again the word "Father," but now with a meaning which it never bore for man before that time; and the last word of the Cross is not "forsaken" but "Father." Sonship has come now on to a new ground of resurrection, restoration; the alienation of the race has been overcome in Christ, restoration is made for the race in Him, and so it is "Father" with which everything begins; it is "God" and "Father." "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. i. 3)—what a wealth that phrase holds when you look at it in the light of the Cross! It is the ground of our approach, our appeal. It is the full meaning of the triumph of His Cross over all the alienation that had come to the race with the loss of God's meaning of sonship.

Briefly then, that is the doctrine and the explanation of "This day have I begotten thee." It is a begetting, not of the eternal Son, not of Christ as God the Son; it is the begetting of the Son of man, of the last Adam, of sonship for man in Him, for us in Him; and so Peter cries, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a

living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (I Pet. i. 3-5).

### **Sonship a Testimony Continuously Manifested**

But then, for our present spiritual benefit there is this other word. While our sonship, standing in all the value of that work of the Cross and in Christ risen, is to be appropriated and entered into by faith as an act, yet for the purpose of testimony here—the testimony of Jesus: that is, the testimony as to that great truth of what He has done—it is something that has to be continuous and of continuous spiritual experience. It is accepted in an act, but it has to be borne out in a continuous process. Sonship, as you will see if you study it in the New Testament, while it relates to a beginning, is something which relates to the whole life of the believer in a practical way of expression, so that, inasmuch as it is inseparably bound up with resurrection in the case of the Lord Jesus, it is always worked out on the basis of resurrection. How is sonship declared as a testimony? How do we know sonship? Well, we say, we believe; there was a time when we believed and in believing we were made children or sons of God. "Ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus (Gal. iii. 26). Because we believe, we have that sonship. That is very good, and of course we have always to cling tenaciously by faith to the fact that it was so, so many years ago. But do you always find that a tremendous present support? Did the Lord just mean it to be something in our past history, something that took place so many years ago? We have always to hold on to that transaction with the Lord and believe, but does it not call for a reinforcement as we go along? Is there not some place for it to be more and more confirmed? Surely that is the teaching of the Word on this matter; and so not only the origin but the experience of the believer should be that of sonship being freshly demonstrated and manifested on the same ground as its origin—that is, resurrection.

### **Sonship in Believers—The Power of Resurrection**

What is God's confirmation of our sonship? It is that He does continually raise us from the dead. He has left us here in a setting and a background of death, we are called upon to live and to walk amidst death. This world is a tomb, which will sooner or later engulf

all those outside of Christ; but here we are in this very tomb, this scene and realm of death, living; not a part of it, but living; and that is the testimony, and that is sonship. Sonship is something for manifestation. The end of this process is the full manifestation of the sons of God according to Romans viii. 19. Here, in a spiritual way, the manifold wisdom of God is shown in the Church—to ourselves, to one another, and to all who have any perception (either to their salvation or to their condemnation),—and, if Paul's word to the Ephesians means anything at all, to the confounding of principalities and powers.

Now we begin at our new birth. You notice Hebrews i and ii—how rich they are in this connection. "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." Then those two chapters are set definitely in the death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. "Made perfect through sufferings" (ii. 10); "he should taste death for every man" (ii. 9). Then various quotations, and amongst them the little fragment from Isaiah, "I and the children whom God hath given me" (ii. 13). "I will declare thy name unto my brethren" (ii. 12). You note the completion of the statement in Isaiah:

Behold, I and the children whom God hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel" (Isa. viii. 18). "I and the children" taken over from Isaiah, related supremely to the Lord Jesus. Christ says, "I and the children whom God hath given me." How?—in resurrection; "begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." It is the corn of wheat; "I and the children." In resurrection, we are the children of Christ, given to Him in resurrection. "I and the children whom God hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel." What signs and wonders? "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet" (Matt. xii. 39). What is that?—death and resurrection. "As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Signs and wonders—resurrection every time. What signs and wonders are you wanting to be able to give the world? If you are spiritual, any sign given will be a spiritual one, and it will be this again and again—that God raised you from the dead; and all who have spiritual intelligence are able to see that. And there are those other than men who have very much spiritual intelligence—principalities and powers are seeing signs and wonders in us in this repeated act of resurrection. There is no other way of ac-

counting for the continuance of the Church through the ages; all the powers of hell and death have come like a deluge upon the Church through the centuries, sometimes seeming almost to quench its light, but it has sprung up again, it has broken forth again, it is greater than ever after every such time.

What is true of the Church as a whole is true in its smaller ways in our own experience. We know in our own hearts how we sometimes become compassed by death, how we almost fear for our own faith at times, wondering if we shall spiritually survive; but—marvellous testimony!—we have gone on; we do not know how, but here we are still going on; it is just that working of “the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe” (Eph. i. 19). It is not our endurance, it is the power of His resurrection. That is the testimony—“for signs and for wonders.” The story is not to be read openly; it will one day be read to His glory. I mean that what you and I go through in secret in this way is not known generally to others—those dark and terrible hours and days and weeks and sometimes months when we wonder if we shall ever come

out of this trough. It is a hidden story. Everyone knows his own dark, deadly hours in the spiritual life, and in other ways too. Well, we begin on resurrection, we go on on resurrection, and we shall end on resurrection—that is the testimony.

Why? Oh, for this reason. When God forsook His Son, that was the final forsaking of man *in Christ*; no more forsaking, no more tasting of death for those who are *in Christ*. Spiritual death is the complete consciousness of what it means to be finally abandoned by God. He tasted that for every man; there is no more of that for those who are in Christ; that death has been swallowed up in Him. So we go on on the ground of that, the ground of tremendous promise. The Lord give us strength to stand on that ground in the darkest and most deadly hour. If we are children of Christ by resurrection, we are for signs and wonders in Israel. Let us believe that for ourselves and for those for whom we have responsibility here. The situation may seem very grim, but it is an opportunity for the signs and wonders of resurrection.

T.A-S.

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August 2 - 4



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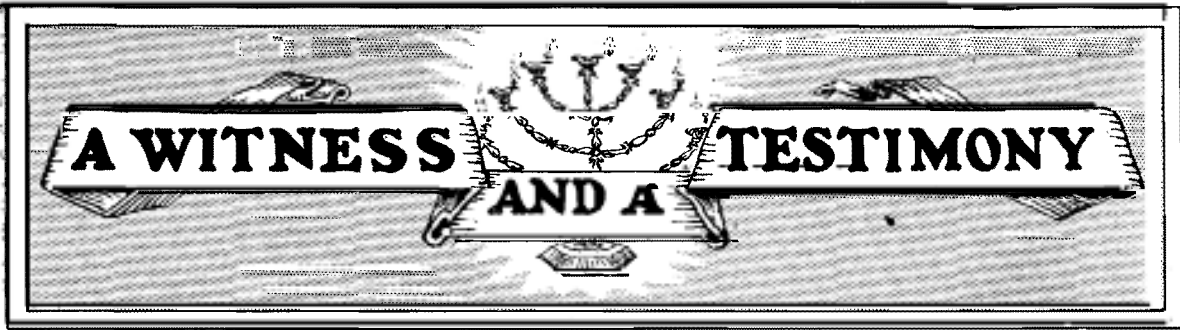
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## Four Greatnesses of Divine Revelation

### IV

#### THE GREATNESS OF THE CROSS

*Reading: I Chron. xxix. 21-22; I Kings viii. 62-63;*

*II Chron. iv. 1; vii. 1, 4-5, 9;*

*Eph. i. 6-8; ii. 1-6; iii. 17-19; v. 27.*

**I**N those chapters of the book of Chronicles we have already seen Solomon so lavishly and overflowingly dealt with by God because God had in view One greater than Solomon Whom He was seeking to interpret to men by way of illustration; so also in the different records of Solomon's reign we find the intimation of the greatness of the Cross given by God by the same means of illustration. The great altar, pointing to the Cross, is brought into view, and then in the double connection—the exaltation of the king and the consecration of the house of God—the greatness of the significance of that altar is intimated by the immensity of the sacrifice.

We but glance, in passing, at that double connection of the Cross. Its greatness is seen firstly related to the enthronement of the king. There is a good deal about that in the New Testament—that enthronement, that exaltation, being *because* of that immense work which was accomplished in the Cross.

“... obedient unto death, yea, the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; that in the name

of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth” (Phil. ii. 8-10).

Then secondly we see how the house of God is established upon the greatness of the Cross, how the Church takes its significance from the Cross. We have read something about that in the Ephesian letter, which has more to do with the Church than any other letter or any other part of the Bible. You find that the very foundations of the Church are in the Cross of the Lord Jesus.

We leave that for the moment, and seek to speak for this time solely about the greatness of the Cross.

#### Myriads of Sacrifices Unavailing

-We are impressed when we read of this sacrifice which was made by Solomon. It is almost bewildering to think of it—battalions upon battalions of oxen! The highways must have been thronged with cattle and with sheep during those days, thousands upon thousands! It does not do to let our imagination dwell upon it. There must have been literally rivers of blood. It is a terrible picture, and but for the moral support which was found in the meaning and spiritual value of it I am quite sure the priests, during those days, must have been overwhelmed by the ghastliness of it. They could only have gone through the slaying of those thousands and thousands of oxen, sheep and lambs, supported by the realisation of what it meant. All that which is beyond



our imagination—and we do not want to dwell upon it too much—is indicative in the type of how great the Cross of the Lord Jesus is. It should lead us to think again. If that is a type of the Cross, a type of Christ the Offering for sin, and if it is true that types are always far less than that which they typify, how great must the Cross be! By mere logical deduction, the Cross in the Divine mind must be immense. And yet we are distinctly told that all that offering in Solomon's day, both at his enthronement and at the dedication of the temple, and all that had led up to it through many generations from the first recorded sacrifice (the offering of Abel) and every subsequent sacrifice, aggregating millions in number—all that, we are distinctly and definitely told, was unavailing in any sense of finality.

In two ways it was unavailing. First, because it never reached a final end; it had to be repeated again and again. There was no end to this thing. Yes, this morning the sacrifice has been offered, and perhaps for the moment it has secured a kind of ceremonial adjustment to God, an acknowledgment of God which is taken account of by Him; but it has to be repeated this evening and again tomorrow and every other morning and evening throughout all life; and when life at its longest is finished, the thing is not concluded, the next generation must take it up and go on, and then the next.

And in this second and included sense it was unavailing, that it never really dealt with conscience; that is, it never rolled from the conscience the burden of sin. It was merely external and ceremonial; it was religion which, though very thorough-going, had really no relatedness to the inner life. “. . . gifts and sacrifices that cannot, as touching the conscience, make the worshipper perfect” (Heb. ix. 9). Positively and definitely, it was unavailing.

### **The Cross—One Offering Availing For Ever**

And look at the immensity of it! I say again, it is overpowering to contemplate all that tremendous offering made by Solomon. But then gather up the generations! and then come to these simple but marvellous statements—“. . . once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (Heb. ix. 26); “. . . the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb. x. 10); “. . . when he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God” (Heb. x. 12). One offering, only one! What a work that must be if in one single act it does what all this other, in its

immensity, through generations has never been able to accomplish! “By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Heb. x. 14). All the other, it says, could *never* make the worshippers perfect; but He, by one offering, perfected for ever. What a sacrifice! What a Cross! Twenty and two thousand oxen, and all the thousands of sheep and lambs, yes; but one single offering did it, and one offering once for all! There is no harm in reiteration, dwelling upon it, that we may really register the significance of this. One single offering, just one, and all that other is swallowed up!

Why one, and once and for all? Well, surely there is present in the one the thing which was absent in all the others. What was that? Simply the full satisfaction of God in the matter of a perfect nature. Although these animal sacrifices were ceremonially perfect, typically without spot or blemish, actually that related only to the physical side. They were selected sacrifices which were of a special breed and pedigree, from which there were absent certain flaws of mixture, but this was merely external. If you got right into the bloodstream, you would find the old creation right enough. Those oxen could fight as well as any others! It was there in the blood, it was nature, the old creation. Only in a sort of ceremonial way were they perfect. But He—not ceremonially, but actually, intrinsically, perfect—offered Himself—not ceremonially, but actually—without spot unto God. In His blood there was no corruption. Somewhere, in the mystery of God, there was a clean cutting in between His inheritance from His earthly mother, and His own Divine nature; the tainted thing was cut off, and in Him was none of the Adam corruption. “The prince of the world cometh: and he hath nothing in me” (John xiv. 30). It was the essential, intrinsic perfection of nature in the one offering which was not found in all the others. That was what God was looking for—a perfect being, a perfect *human* being, a perfect specimen of creation, one who in essential nature fully satisfied the thought of God in making man. God found that in Him; and that being offered unto God, there need be no more offering. It was once and for all and for ever. It is finished, God is satisfied. That is the great foundation of our faith; the greatness of the Cross in the light of Who it is that is on that Cross; for it is the greatness of Christ which gives the greatness to the Cross.

The greatness of the Cross in such terms is the basis of our salvation, our hope, our justification, our righteousness. Then let us once

and for all cease to look for perfection anywhere else, in ourselves or in others, and keep our eyes on the object which satisfies God—the sole and final object of His satisfaction. We have to see the Cross, then, in those Divine terms, in its four dimensions—breadth and length and height and depth—and until we have so seen it our salvation is still lacking in essential qualities, and we, as saved people, will not be the people that God means us to be.

### The Range of the Cross

The next thing that I want to say is that the Cross of our Lord Jesus is different from all that foreshadowing and typifying in the Old Testament, different from this immense representation in the days of Solomon, in this second respect, that it is super-historical. That sounds technical. What I mean is that it is something which is bigger than time, and time is only another word for history. I wonder if you have noticed that in the earliest Christian literature, that is, the epistles of the New Testament (not the Gospels, they were written after the epistles—bear that clearly in mind, it will make a lot of difference) Calvary is never once mentioned. The story of the crucifixion, of the Cross, is never referred to in the earliest Christian literature. Reference is made always to the death of Christ; not the crucifixion, not Calvary, but the death. There is a vast deal of difference. One is just historical, a fact—the crucifixion, something that took place at a certain time in a certain place in the history of this world; that is the crucifixion, it is historical. The death of Christ is not that. The Apostles, when they write their epistles, are occupied with something spiritual and not historical; universal and not local; eternal and not just in time; they deal with the death of Christ. It is set in an immense setting, against an immense background. The death is referred to a very great deal, and yet the story of the death is never once told in the epistles. That is not without significance. It is because here you have got away into the real realm of the meaning of the Cross. The crucifixion was less than forty years old when the epistles were written. I venture to think that if something like that had happened in our lifetime and we were writing within forty years of the event, we should tell the story, giving all the details, saying what happened, and where, and who was present. We should give the details that we have in the Gospels. And yet the Apostles, when they wrote their epistles, left all that out, although they were writing on what happened. But with them it was spiritual, it was inner, it was in another realm altogether. The Cross

of the Lord Jesus was to them something infinitely greater than an historical happening on a hill outside Jerusalem. The way in which the death of Christ is introduced is simply—“Once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (Heb. ix. 26). Simple—but, you see, it goes far beyond anything of time, and anything local. Is it not remarkable that, in their writings, they never make it a date in the calendar? It never was a date in their calendar naturally, and yet it was the thing that had changed all calendars. It was not to them just something historical, it was spiritual, and much bigger than an event to be marked upon the calendar.

### God Vindicated in Choosing Israel

Now let us get to something of the meaning of that. In the first place, in the Cross of the Lord Jesus all history is gathered up and transcended, and we are brought into the great realm of the Divine sovereignty. Oh, I find such a tremendous uplift and release and emancipation as more and more I contemplate the sovereignty of God, especially working through grace. Here in the Cross of the Lord Jesus we have the vindication of God in His choice of Israel. The story of Israel is history, but there is something behind that. There is the choice of Israel, chosen from among all the nations, separated unto God, a sovereign act for a sovereign purpose. What was the purpose? Why did God choose Israel and separate them as a people unto Himself? With one object—that by means of them He might reveal Himself to all the nations and make them a blessing to all. That was God's purpose. In order that they might fulfil that great elect purpose they must be a separated people, cut off from the nations, and having no communication with them. They must be a holy people, separated, distinguished, completely isolated in their moral and spiritual life from the nations, a people wholly for God's possession, in order that they might bring God in revelation to all the nations. You see how essential their separation was for that. It is a principle, a law. If you are going to be an instrument, a channel, a vessel of Divine revelation and blessing, you have to be consecrated, sanctified, wholly cut off, separated unto God. Hence Satan's persistent and continuous effort and labour to break down that distinctiveness and to get Israel mixed up with the other peoples round about. The whole history of Israel is the history of that effort of Satan to spoil their consecration; and when Israel in decline lost the vision of their elect calling and

purpose, and that great Divine intention concerning them faded from their view, then they became mixed up with the nations, they intermarried, and the wall of distinctiveness was broken down. And the prophets came in and proclaimed Israel's holy and elect calling, to remind them how God separated them unto Himself from the beginning, to bring again into view the great thing which God had done in choosing them, and accordingly appealing to them to separate themselves again unto God and destroy all this spiritual fornication—a very prominent idea in the language of the prophets—to get rid of it and again be holy. You know the prophets are full of that; and what did Israel do with the prophets who preached their holy vocation and appealed for their return? They persecuted and killed them; and that is how we find things at the end of the Old Testament. And then He appeared, born of the seed of David, born under the law, a Jew; so far as things here on the earth are concerned, a Jew, of Israel; holy, undefiled, separate from sinners. You see the wide setting. He has taken up in Himself all that which Israel was called and chosen to do and to be; He is that. In offering that to God, what does He do? He fulfils Israel's whole destiny, brings God and the blessing to all the world. He is Israel in fulfilment. In this One, God is vindicated in the choice of Israel. In the Cross of the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, the sovereignty of God is vindicated. He has fulfilled all; God has been justified. That is why He came of the seed of Abraham, and of the seed of David—to vindicate God's choice of Israel, to bring a blessing to all the nations; and in the Cross of Christ, not only Israel but all the peoples of the earth receive the Divine blessing which was ever God's thought for them. Nothing like that was possible in Jewish sacrifices. How great is this Cross, and how wonderful is the Divine sovereignty!

### God Vindicated as Creator

I wonder if you are drawing comfort from that wide application of the principle that, in the sovereignty of God, in Jesus Christ all the tragedy and failure is met and overcome, all the going wrong is accounted for. The Lord has simply swallowed it up; and now, not at this moment to Israel as a nation, but to every member of that race as of other races—God says, The tragedy of Jew and Gentile is taken up in the Cross, and by means of that Cross I am vindicated after all in my ever having created man. Men reason about this creation and say, Tragedy, God's defeat, God's failure, God's mistake! Look at it! Why did

God ever make this world, and man? Did He not know what would happen? He is not justified in having created this world, seeing how it has gone! But as in Israel, so in the whole race, the Cross of the Lord Jesus is the vindication of God; and that is the meaning of such words as "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. xiii. 8). It means that God, in the Cross of the Lord Jesus, took the whole history of this world and swallowed it up. For now, while the world is as it is, the sovereignty of God through the Cross of the Lord Jesus would turn the tragedy to good account, the suffering to value; and then afterward He would deliver the whole creation from its present condition.

### Heavenly Powers of Evil Overcome

That leads us to the closing word. The Cross of the Lord Jesus is not only super-historical, it is extra-terrestrial in its range. The Word of God reveals to us that this world is not something in itself; what is happening on this earth is not limited to the earth. What is revealed is that there is an immense struggle going on over, around and outside this world for the government, the mastery, of the universe. Intimations are given in such passages of Scripture as Ephesians vi. 12—"world-rulers of this darkness . . . spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies." There is a conflict going on. In the book of Daniel we have intimations of it—spiritual princes withstanding the archangel in relation to the Lord's interests as wrapped up in this world (Dan. x. 13, 20). Over and around this world the struggle goes on for the mastery of the universe. The Cross of the Lord Jesus had its meaning in that realm. Right out into those circumferences of spiritual conflict and contention He moved in His Cross when He stripped off from Himself the principalities and the powers and "made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it" (Col. ii. 15). Yes, right out in that realm the Cross of the Lord Jesus had its ultimate and supreme meaning, and the issue of the lordship of this universe was settled in the Cross. So, in this letter to the Ephesians, which is holding us all the time in the background of our mind, we have it inclusively and comprehensively stated—"when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenlies, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and he put all things in subjection under his feet" (Eph. i. 20-22). That is the triumph of the Cross, that is the range of the meaning



and value of the death of Christ. He, in dying, slew death; in being delivered to Satan, He overcame him; in going to the grave, He robbed the grave of its sting forever. Here is the sovereignty of God! How great it is—super-historical, extra-terrestrial! How great is the Cross of the Lord Jesus! Who can describe it, who can reach unto it?

But, dear friends, while we contemplate it in that way, let it not remain merely as wonderful language and ideas. Oh what this Cross says in the language of hope, of certainty, for us! Have you despaired of yourself, of others, or of this world? The Cross of the Lord Jesus answers all your despair. There is nothing impossible since Jesus died and rose again. You and I are not so impossible as we may have thought. No, everything is possible since Jesus rose from the dead. In the resurrection the seal of His universal triumph was given by God. Ours is the Gospel of hope since Jesus died. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (I Pet. i. 3-5).

### The Physical Creation Redeemed

I have said nothing about the Cross and the redemption of this creation. Between Israel and God's vindication in relation to Israel on the one hand, and the universe, that extra-terrestrial realm, on the other hand, there comes the earth, and in the Cross the redemption of this very physical creation is secured. The vanity under which it lies, the curse and the corruption which are in it, have all been met in the Cross of the Lord Jesus and overcome, and in Him there will be an incorruptible creation—our bodies as a part thereof, but more than they—a whole creation. What a day that will be when this whole creation is delivered from the bondage of corruption, when the groan that is now in it gives place to a shout of deliverance and emancipation, when it will be glorified! He will make the place of His feet glorious (Isa. lx. 13); that refers to this earth under His feet. And then later there will be "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (II Pet. 3, 13). That is the hope of the Cross of the Lord Jesus. It is a great Cross, and, with all our struggles to describe it we cannot compass it. The Lord give us a new heart appreciation of how great was that one offering made once and for all.

T.A-S.

## "Be Ye Also Enlarged"

*"And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea-shore" (I Kings iv. 29).*

*"Our mouth is open unto you, O Corinthians, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own affections. Now for a recompense in like kind (I speak as unto my children), be ye also enlarged" (II Cor. vi. 11-13).*

THESE words, "be ye also enlarged," should awaken in any exercised heart a deep sense of need and a great desire to be larger. The Corinthians were not aware of their need in this direction. That need was all the greater because of their lack of appreciation of it. Solomon, on the other hand, was deeply impressed with his own need, and as he waited before the Lord at Gibeon in the beginning of his reign over the people of Israel, God appeared to him and asked him what was the deepest desire of his heart. Solomon's exercise before the Lord was on this wise—he perceived the great goodness of God to him, and realised the immense responsibilities devolving upon

him as well as the glorious destiny that was opening out before him, and as he looked at the vast realms into which God was now bringing him he was appalled by his own sense of littleness. "I am but a little child" (I Kings iii. 7). So the burden of his prayer before the Lord that night at Gibeon was this—Lord, make me bigger! Lord, enlarge me! And God was pleased with Solomon's desire, for it was a right one, and God gave it to him—"largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea-shore."

Are we Solomons or are we Corinthians? God has chosen us, yes, even us, for a tremendous vocation beside which even Solomon's throne pales into insignificance. He has chosen the "things that are not" (I Cor. i. 28). Solomon knew that, and he said, Lord, make me a bigger man! Unfortunately, the Corinthians did not appreciate how small they were and how straitened or how narrow was their heart attitude. They rather felt how big they were. But whether we are like Solomon or like the Corinthians, the Lord's word to us is—"Be ye also enlarged."

### The Realm of Enlargement—The Heart

You notice in both passages where the enlargement takes place—in the heart. Solomon might have asked for enlargement in another realm. He might have asked for God's favour in such a way as to make him manifestly a big man in the eyes of men, that riches and wealth and honour should be poured into him, that he might be great. He might have asked that, but he did not. He asked for greatness, not in reception, but in giving; not the greatness of what might flow into him, but for enlargement that more might flow out of him. How important! Is that not just where the Corinthians were wrong?—wanting even in Divine things enlargement for themselves. Whether they realised it or not, they were becoming very little people, very narrow. O Corinthians, you are straitened! The more you want the Lord to make something of you the smaller you become. All Solomon's desire was to have a heart big enough that he might adequately serve the people of God. Well, God gave him the rest. God was so pleased that He said, You have not asked for that, but I will give it to you. The greatest thing that God did for Solomon, and the greatest He can do for any man, is to give him largeness of heart, for therein lies the secret of all Divine purpose and blessing to others, and, moreover, of all true, pure joy to ourselves. "It is more blessed"—not only more seemly, more Christian, more right—"more *blessed*," the Lord said, "to give than to receive" (Acts xx. 35). That is where largeness is to be found, and that is the Lord's yearning desire over His people, especially His Corinthian people. Oh, for bigger hearts! They have got their heads full of Divine things. They are a church in which they are simply pushing one another aside because they have so many revelations and so much to say of Divine truths that they have learned, and so many gifts—they are full of it, but, oh, how little their hearts are! Be enlarged! Have the knowledge, but, oh, above all, have the love! You will notice that with Solomon the wisdom and the love were abounding. God gave him wisdom, but above all He gave him largeness of heart, and so the two found their balance in one another.

### Evidences of Largeness of Heart

#### (a) The Constraint of the Love of Christ

Now, how were the Corinthians so narrow? The Apostle was not like that, He could say in all humility, My heart is enlarged toward you, I am wide open! Where was the difference between the man whose heart was enlarged and the people who were so narrow? Well, first of

all, I think, it was the positive attitude that the Apostle had as contrasted with the negative attitude of the Corinthians. I must explain that. The Apostle said earlier on in this letter "The love of Christ constraineth us" (II Cor. v. 14). The Corinthians were looking at this and that—whether Paul was an Apostle after all: whether you ought to eat meat sacrificed to idols: and all this, that and the other. I wonder whether the Corinthians, if they had spoken truly, would have said, The love of Christ (if it was the love of Christ) *restraineth* us—all the time looking for what they must *not* do to be true to the Lord. The Apostle did not say, The love of Christ *restraineth* me—though it did when it was necessary. "The love of Christ *constraineth*" me, forces me out, forces me on. There are directions in which I cannot go, but I am always looking for directions in which I *can* go. There are lengths to which I must not go, but I am always trying to go as far as I can in the love of God. It is a different attitude, and therein lay a great difference in them.

#### (b) The Patience of Christ

Another striking thing that the Apostle says about himself with regard to his Apostleship is that he was a man of great patience; twice over—once in the list given in II Cor. vi. and later on in the twelfth chapter. He speaks in Chapter vi of all his sufferings and labours and so on, and at the head of them all he puts "in much patience." Then in chapter twelve rather strikingly—"Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience." Now, what about the Corinthians? Was not that just the trouble?—they had no patience. The man who was eating the meat sacrificed to idols had no patience with the other man; and these people who had heard the wonderful preaching of Apollos had no patience with Paul. Then the whole matter about women brought up in the first letter—it looks to me as if some wives had no patience with their husbands; they had to rush forward and speak because they could speak better than their husbands. There was this attitude in so many ways. The Apostle had to lay down laws about one man sitting down when another had a revelation. You do not have to put laws in an assembly where love reigns. But they had no patience with one another, they could not wait for the other man to stop. Over against that, the Apostle says, You have no patience with one another; how much patience have I had with you! The Corinthians were not the only church—the Apostle was not a hen with one chick and nothing else to care about. There

were plenty of other churches, Christians, people who did want him and would attend to him, and yet, what patience with these Corinthians! The more he loved them, the less they loved him back (II Cor. xii. 15) but he went on loving. "The signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience." I marvel at the patience of Paul with the Corinthians, but I marvel more at the patience of the blessed Lord with us all. We have no patience with one another. How true it is. That is because we are so narrow, our hearts are so small. What patience the Lord has with us all, and the Apostle Paul had something of the largeness of heart of his Master, and he had patience with them all.

### (c) Christ-Consciousness

Then what blessed selflessness was found in him. The trouble with the Corinthians was that they were so self-conscious all the time. Later on the Apostle had to say to them, I did not make you inferior to any of the churches, except that I did not take any money from you—forgive me this wrong (II Cor. xii. 13). They were touchy, they thought evidently that the Apostle was not treating them as he treated other churches, and the whole atmosphere, especially of the first letter, is of men who were so conscious of themselves—their way, their ministry, their church—they were living as men. There is nothing so straitens and narrows down our heart as self-consciousness of the wrong kind. Listen to the Apostle, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses," "I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries." What a strange man Paul must have been! Do let us listen to the word—"I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses." Can we say that of ourselves? I fear not, except when by the Lord's goodness we are able in some small measure to do what the Apostle did according to his next words. He says, "I take pleasure" in them "for Christ's sake" (II Cor. xii. 9-10). His heart, his whole life's attitude, was turned upward to the Lord. That was what made him the big man he was. His Christ-consciousness enlarged him, and their self-consciousness narrowed them down.

### Largeness of Heart Expresses Likeness to the Father

"I speak as unto my children," he said—I am your father, you are my children; you ought to be like your father—"Now for a recompense in like kind be ye also enlarged." What he means is, I want you to respond to me in like kind. I have a big heart to you; if

you are my true children you will have a big heart back to me. The matter of father and son does come into it—it did with Solomon. When Solomon was praying before the Lord, he spoke about his father, the man who really brought the kingdom in. What a big-hearted man David was! and the essence of Solomon's prayer is this—Lord, you have shown mercy to me and to my father in giving me his place to fill; but he was such a big man—what a heart he had! Lord, make my heart more like my father's. And the Corinthians, if they had not been worried by their own self-interests, would have said, Thank God for Paul, our spiritual father. What a man! What love! Lord, make us more like him! And we, surely when we are made anew conscious of the love of our heavenly Father, should, like Solomon, have this as our prayer, Make me more like my Father, give me a heart like Thine! It is a matter of sonship.

### Largeness of Heart Essential for Large Responsibilities

And it is the matter of a Throne. Solomon needed a big heart because of the big range over which he was to rule. The same expression is used of the people of God as is used of Solomon's heart. The people of God, we read, "were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude" (I Kings iv. 20), and then we read in verse 29 "God gave Solomon . . . largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore." The largeness of Solomon's heart was in view of the large realm in which he had responsibility to rule for the Lord. Solomon was a little man in himself, and he could rule the kingdom only as his littleness was swallowed up in a great largeness of Divine love.

Now, dear friends, the Lord Jesus said to His disciples, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke xii. 32). We are called to a Kingdom, we are the little flock, but how often we are tempted to become little in a wrong way, closing down, shutting up, because we are self-conscious. How vast is the realm into which God in His love has brought us that we may rule there with His Son!—truly it is as the sand which is upon the seashore. How vast the Divine interests are! Well, Solomon had a heart that was commensurate with the tremendous interests of God into which he had been brought, and so had the Apostle Paul. Would to God that we had! "As the sand that is on the seashore." It was an infinite realm of demand, of opportunity, into which Solomon was brought, but there was an in-



finite of Divine resource to give him a heart big enough for it. If we are truly to come to the Kingdom—not just to talk about it; we may think and talk about the Divine Kingdom and the Lord's purpose for us in a way which will narrow us down to be the most critical, fanatical, dogmatic, self-sufficient and self-righteous contradiction of everything that the Lord means by the Kingdom—if we are truly to come to the Kingdom, we may be few, but all the more reason why our hearts should be enlarged. We may have to stand alone as, in a sense, Solomon did. Well, all the more reason for us to say, Lord, deliver me from letting my isolation make me a narrow, dwarfed soul; Lord, give me a heart like Thine!

### **All Enlargement Must be Balanced**

"Be ye also enlarged." There is a question of balance. The real thought in this is not enlargement in a general way, but breadth. Interestingly enough, in both Hebrew and Greek, both for Solomon and the Corinthians, the real thought in the word is not grandeur, not magnitude, but breadth, and you will, of course, think immediately of Ephesians iii. 18—of the love of Christ in its "breadth and length and height and depth"; and you will think of that holy, heavenly city concerning which it is said "the length and the breadth and the height thereof are equal" (Rev. xxi. 16). We sometimes talk about undeveloped, stunted growth. But there is also the danger of growing up too quickly and outgrowing our strength. The Corinthians were shooting up to heaven, but narrowing down so that they were not even sure whether the Apostle Paul was one with whom they could have fellowship. It is a question of balance—height and breadth. The Lord wants spiritual poise and balance. Go up, but oh, remember that we must be enlarged to go out. That is the safe way, it is the only way. Of course, Solomon's trouble in the end—and therein he is a warning to us—was his breadth getting out of proportion to his height. He became too broad, and that was a sad end to his life. Breadth and height must go together—love to God and love to one another. "Be ye also enlarged."

### **The Way to Enlargement**

#### **(a) Recognising the Need for It**

I bring you this, then, as the Lord's challenge. But of course the practical question is, How do we get enlarged? May I suggest one or two points that may be helpful in this respect? In the first place, we have to recognise our need for enlargement. That is where

Solomon was right. As he was there in the presence of the Lord, he did not feel, What a wonderful man I am, what a wonderful calling is mine! He felt, O Lord, I need expanding to this! That is a very helpful attitude, especially to Divine truth. The work of the Spirit of God is not done merely when we are hearing or reading His Word; we need to be expanded, stretched, enlarged to the truth which we believe and receive. Recognition of our need will help us tremendously. This is one of the few occasions where Paul speaks to the people as men—"O Corinthians!" He speaks similarly to the Galatians—"O Galatians!" Later on, in a different and happier tone, he says, "Ye Philippians." He means, I am not referring to people in general—I could put down your names. O Corinthians, you are the people I know; I know how narrow you are! Do we not also need to be much exercised in the Lord's presence and to hear Him say to us, Oh, so-and-so, be ye also enlarged? That is the first thing, to recognise our need and be constantly exercised about it.

#### **(b) Recognising the Divine Command**

I think another need is, to be deeply impressed by our duty in this matter—the Lord's commandment that we should love. The Apostle says in another place "The end of the charge is love" (I Tim. i. 5).

We are always ready enough to say, The Lord has commanded us to be true to His Word; I must speak to that brother, I must do this or that, because the Lord has commanded it. How ready we are to get hold of the Lord's commands in certain directions! That may be right, but let us hear the Lord saying—The first commandment at all times, indeed the end of every commandment, is love. You can find a commandment to justify some critical attitude if you are looking for it, but this is a greater commandment, and we need to be constantly reminded of it. To be enlarged is not a spiritual luxury. It is a Divine command.

#### **(c) Dwelling in the Divine Love**

Then, thirdly, it does not happen in a day. It may in Solomon, but not in Paul. It is a process of years, many of them years of trial and suffering; but it was not the trial and the suffering that made him a bigger man, it was that in the trial and suffering he had a deeper appreciation of the love of God. Oh, that we might know the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of Christ! Dwelling in the Lord and in His love, constantly relating everything and everybody to the great truth of Christ's love, surely must have an enlarging

effect upon our own hearts.

Well, the Apostle was able to say, "My heart is enlarged . . . be ye also enlarged"; and the greater Apostle and High Priest of our faith, the Lord Jesus, looks down to us and

says, There is no straitening in Me; you are not straitened because of Me; My heart is enlarged; now for a recompense in like kind, be ye also enlarged.

H.F.

## The New Day of the Spirit

### I

#### The Old Testament Taken Up in the Book of "The Acts"

"Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and spake forth unto them, saying . . . This is that which hath been spoken through the prophet Joel, And it shall be in the last days, saith God, I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: yea and on my servants and on my handmaidens in those days will I pour forth of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy" (Acts ii. 14, 16-18).

**NOT** one of us would have any question that Peter was speaking under the government and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Believing that, and having no doubt about it, it is very significant that he should have added something which looks like a quotation but which the prophet quoted did not say. Joel did not say "It shall be in the last days." Joel said, "And it shall come to pass afterward. . . ." The phrase "the last days" is found in other prophets, but not in the passage from which Peter was quoting. It makes no difference to Peter's inspiration, but it gives a significance to which we should pay attention. Under the Holy Spirit's government, Peter used those words "in the last days." We have to know what the Holy Spirit meant, and, seeing that the application was to the time at the beginning of this dispensation, I think we are not wrong in concluding that He was indicating that a certain time and order had come to an end—the last days of that particular order had come, and now there was an afterward; in other words, a new day, a new age.

#### Everything in This Age Essentially Spiritual

If that is right, then the book which goes by the title "The Acts" is the book which introduces a new age; it marks the passing of certain days, age-days, and the arrival of a new day, a new age-day. But it not only marks that change, it sets forth the character of the new day. Among the many very im-

portant things which the Lord's people need to recognize anew is this—the real Divine nature of the new day which came in with that recorded in this book. The established and accepted title of the book is limiting and, to some extent, misleading. You must remember that the writer of the book never gave it that title. Luke, who wrote it, did not call it "The Acts," nor the "Acts of the Apostles," nor the "Acts of the Holy Spirit." He did not give it a title. If it had a title at all, it is in his introduction, and that purely by inference. "The former treatise I made . . . concerning all that Jesus began both to do and to teach," and the inference is that this is a further treatise of all that Jesus began to do and teach. I say, the established title, "The Acts," is limiting, and, to some extent, misleading for this reason—that it puts all the emphasis upon activity, and in so doing obscures the nature of the activity, the real character of what had been brought in, the very essence of things; that is, it very largely obscures the fact that this new dispensation is absolutely spiritual in every sense. We know how "the baptism of the Spirit," "the filling of the Spirit," all that is meant by the use of the word "Pentecost", has been taken up by men and interpreted in terms of manifestations, things that can be outwardly noted—activities, works, done in a certain kind of heat and enthusiasm and strength and assertiveness. You know what the general mentality is when mention is made of being filled with the Spirit. At once our minds leap to certain forms of manifestation. But that is not the basic thing. The basic fact is that something has changed altogether, and there is a new character given to the new age; and that is that, for this age, everything is essentially and absolutely spiritual.

#### First the Natural, Then the Spiritual

I think Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians, has—not with this object in view but under the same Spirit's direction and inspiration—given a full summary of what this change-over really is. It occurs in a phrase in I Cor. xv. 46—

"Howbeit that is not first which is spiritual,



but that which is natural; then that which is spiritual."

First that which is natural, afterward that which is spiritual. That is only saying, in other words, that the days which have gone were natural days, the days in which Divine things were manifested naturally, on natural grounds. They could all be grasped by natural apprehension: men could see, men could feel. All that realm of God's activity was possible of observation naturally; but now that has passed.

#### **The Establishment of the Lordship of the Holy Spirit**

"And it shall come to pass afterward . . ."; "afterward that which is spiritual." That represents a Divine order and an established economy in the arrangement of this world's history. First that which is natural in everything, afterward that which is spiritual: and this book (we will use its accepted title, "The Acts") is the afterward that is spiritual. And one of the most wonderful things is that this book comprehends the Old Testament and changes it right over into the spiritual realm. The fact that this new day as ushered in and set forth in this book is a spiritual day is shown in quite a number of ways in the book itself—pre-eminently, of course, by the fact that, as never before, the Lordship of the Holy Spirit is established. He, in sovereignty, comes and takes charge of everything in relation to Divine purposes. He assumes the custodianship of God's eternal purposes and takes them into His own hands—and that in a very mighty way. He does demonstrate that He has assumed charge of God's interests in His Son; and if you can withstand a mighty rushing wind (Acts ii. 2) you can withstand that sovereignty of the Holy Spirit. But in other ways His sovereignty is seen—amongst them, the way in which the Old Testament is taken up and reproduced spiritually, in some matters reversed, in others transferred. We shall see that in a moment. Again, in the swift challenge at the beginning, which the flesh and the natural life met; the Holy Spirit is in charge, and He immediately demonstrates that here flesh must not encroach and the natural life has no place. In the case of Ananias and Sapphira it is shown that things are spiritual now and the flesh and the Spirit are in deadly combat. It is a new spiritual age that has come in, and here that which is natural has passed. First that which is natural; afterward that which is spiritual.

#### **The Deepening Hiddenness of the Lord's Ways**

Another thing not recognized as fully and

clearly as it should be is the deepening hiddenness of the Lord's ways. Have you noticed this, that, whereas at the beginning there were manifestations in many directions, in many manners, plain and obvious, as you move through this book you find that the Lord is going deeper and deeper, and those things are not so obvious and conspicuous as they once were? Early in the book, you can bring the sick and just lay them on the ground, and the very shadow of Peter passing by heals them. But "Trophimus I left . . . sick" (II Tim. iv. 20): "Epaphroditus . . . was sick nigh unto death" (Phil. ii. 27): "We despaired even of life: yea, we ourselves have had the sentence of death within ourselves" (II Cor. i. 9), says Paul. The Lord's ways are getting deeper. First that which is natural; afterward that which is spiritual. That opens the door to a very large field.

#### **"The Acts" a Book of Spiritual Principles**

Then there is the fact that this is a book of spiritual principles, not necessarily to be taken and imitated, but demanding that we know the principle which lies behind what is happening, and stand in possession of that principle. In that connection, let us remember that this book called "The Acts" was not written until all Paul's letters had been written and circulated. There had been some thirty-five years of missionary activity, preaching, and teaching through the Apostolic letters before "The Acts" was written, or before any one of the Gospels was written, and that to me is of tremendous significance. You see, they had received the teaching, they had the spiritual interpretation and meaning, and then they got the historical record of what happened. It would be good for us to stay with that alone as one thing for an hour. You can understand why Paul wrote to the Corinthians as he did about the manifestations. They were taken up by the acts, the happenings, the events, the outward things. He wrote to seek to get them to the inside of them, and to show that what mattered was not the things in the first instance, but the spirit behind, and that love is far more important than outward manifestations and gifts.

Well, you see, all this is a very strong foundation for this conclusion, that a new kind of day has come in, that things now are essentially spiritual. "Afterward that which is spiritual."

#### **The Creations: Redemption by Resurrection**

That is a general setting forth of the situation. Let us begin to get inside of that and break it up. We said that this book comprehends the Old Testament and does two things



with it. It reverses some things, and it transfers others from one realm to another. I will explain that in a moment. First of all, this book comprehends what we have at the beginning of Genesis—the creation. The creation, as we have it in the natural in Genesis, is a work of natural redemption, the redeeming of a creation from corruption, from death, from chaos; and that redemption of the creation at the beginning of the natural was through resurrection. We can say quite truly that it was a raising of the natural from a death, from a grave, bringing it up in resurrection. “First that which is natural; then that which is spiritual.” The beginning of things here in “Acts” is redemption through resurrection. The great note of “Acts,” of all Apostolic preaching, is the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

Now you see a little more value in what I said just now about the letters having been written before. The people who would read the historic account of things in “Acts” had already received I Cor. xv and the doctrine of the resurrection in Romans vi. They knew the doctrine of the resurrection of Christ, that it was not only for us but included us, that we were raised together with Him, that a new creation was brought into being in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, that we were begotten again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (I Pet. i. 3). The fact of the resurrection is then set forth in the historic account as the great, all-governing reality. It is a new creation, it is a redemption that is in Christ Jesus. You break that up again and you see that inside of the redemption there is the means employed. Firstly, light and life—two great redeeming powers and influences. Oh, these representatives, the twelve—twelve is the number that speaks of representation—are themselves the embodiment of this. Look at them before Christ rose, and if ever men were in the dark they were—groping as blind in the darkness. See those on the road to Emmaus, and all the rest—dark, blind, despairing, and for them the atmosphere was filled with death. He had died; it was the end of everything. But look at them here! Why, truly, those who sat in darkness have seen a great light! They have emerged, the light has broken and, in Christ, has dawned upon their darkness; they see it all and they are out! Life with light has brought them into a new world, but it is spiritual light, it is spiritual life, it is not capable of being apprehended except in a spiritual way. People can listen, can see that something has happened to them, and still be

unaffected until the same mighty influence gets to work upon themselves. It is something that is wholly and solely spiritual, and the flesh cannot take hold of it. Let Simon the sorcerer try to get this on natural grounds! He will find himself under terrible judgment (Acts viii. 9-24). This is something which can be had only by the Spirit. It is light and life of a new order altogether; the flesh cannot enter into this. “First that which is natural; then that which is spiritual.”

#### **The Instrument of the Creations— The Spirit**

The means—light and life. And then the instrument—“and the Spirit of God brooded upon the face of the deep” (Genesis i. 2). We can say that the Spirit of God was the Executive of the Godhead in the redemption of the natural creation. Here, “Acts” brings in that Divine agent again; the Spirit of God bringing out of the dark and out of death into the new life of this new creation in Christ Jesus. It is spiritual.

#### **The Object of the Creations—A Man**

And then the object. What was the object of the natural creation? Unto what was it? Well, the object was man, a man whom God had in His eye, a man according to God's mind. Everything was brought into being, and the climax of all was man. First that which was natural—and it failed; afterward that which is spiritual. And here is the man in Christ, the new creation, and he is a new order of man. It is simple and elementary, but it helps us to recognise that we have come into a new day of a different character; it is spiritual now. This book has taken up the very beginning in the natural, and carried it over, passed it through, into the spiritual; and it is saying as clearly and forcefully as anything can be said, This is the true! The natural breaks down and fails, it is transient, it does not abide; the spiritual is eternal, established forever.

Place alongside that word from I Cor. xv. 46 another one from II Tim. i. 10 “. . . our Saviour Christ Jesus . . . abolished death, and brought life and incorruption to light through the gospel.” That is something for us to take hold of. We are all so conscious in this world and in ourselves of the corruptible side. Yes, it is there; but through the Gospel life and incorruption have been brought to light. One of the things said so early in this book is a prophecy taken from the Old Testament and applied to the Lord Jesus—“It was not possible that he should be holden of death” (Acts

ii. 24). Why? Because the Word had said “. . . neither wilt thou give thy Holy One to see corruption” (Acts ii. 27). “Life and incorruption through the Gospel.” And that life is ours; that life within us, in our renewed spirit, is the germ of a spiritual body which is at the other end of the course; first the natural, then that which is spiritual, and in I Cor. xv. 46 the application is to the body. There are natural bodies—not that which is spiritual is first, but that which is natural; then that which is spiritual. “To each seed a body of its own” (I Cor. xv. 38).

Well, the object in view is a man who can never see corruption, an incorruptible humanity. Oh, thank God that the Lord Jesus walked through this world for thirty-three years and was never in the slightest degree corrupted; although Satan and all his powers and agents, demoniacal and human, sought to corrupt that Divine One in some way, to ensnare and entrap Him into a taint, a corruption, He was never corrupted in any sense; He triumphed. He went through death and the grave itself and saw no corruption. Thank God, I say, for that, because He is the Firstborn among many brethren who will be indwelt by that same incorruptible life, and who will be eventually that humanity in God’s universe for which the universe was created. An incorruptible humanity—that is the prospect. And that is the Gospel—something more than a gospel of just being forgiven; it is a marvellous Gospel that is brought to light. The object—a man; but that kind of man.

### The Reversal of Babel

I dare not take all the fragments of the Old Testament that this book of “Acts” brings into view from the creation. Immediately, without any loss of time, it leaps over to what comes some distance on in the book of Genesis; and here it is not a transferring, it is a reversing. I refer to Babel. You remember what was said about Babel. “And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech” (Gen. xi. 1), and in that oneness they formed a confederacy to build their tower, to be independent of God, to make a name for themselves; to glorify, to deify a fallen, corrupted manhood. They challenged heaven in their unity, and God said, “Let us go down and there confound their language”; and there came confusion of tongues. He broke them up with His curse so that they understood not one another, and therefore could not work together, could no longer go on in their evil oneness. We know it very well to-day. Pentecost leaps right in there. There were gathered in Jerusalem

that day men out of every nation under heaven. Their countries are tabulated; the Holy Spirit takes great care to see that they are all mentioned. And then a mighty thing happens, a miracle is wrought by the Holy Ghost and the diversity of the tongues of that great concourse is transcended in a moment, so that men exclaim with astonishment “Are not all these which speak Galilaean? And how hear we, every man in our own language . . .” (Acts ii. 7, 8). What is the meaning of this? Babel is reversed. The declaration is made—through the victory of Calvary, in the power of the Holy Spirit, the curse is dealt with, and there is a oneness in the Spirit possible for all men, that they can understand the wonderful things of God. God has set His spiritual principle right there at the beginning in this most powerful way, and He has said in an acted principle that in Christ Jesus there is a universality of oneness of a heavenly and spiritual order which cannot be found outside; which is Calvary’s answer to Babel.

Now, you do not interpret that naturally, but spiritually. People are always pressing for the natural interpretation. Tongues! Whatever God may do sovereignly in His will in that matter, the fact is this—that very often Satan has simulated that very work, and the result has been more confusion among the saints, and the essential law of oneness has not been established. The test is whether this brings saints into the realisation of their absolute oneness in Christ, or does this make more confusion? That is a very good test as to whether it belongs to that which is natural or to that which is spiritual. When the Holy Spirit really has His place and His way, He brings into a universality in Christ. It does not matter what you are naturally, of what nation or tribe or kindred or people or colour or language, it does not matter at all where you come from or what you are, whether of high degree or low; when the Holy Spirit gets possession, there is a universality in Christ, a blessed spiritual oneness, which is God’s answer to the world and to the enemy; God’s counter, through Calvary, to Babel.

I know the Church has a long way to go to enter into that, and how great the difficulties are in this matter of so many tongues amongst the Lord’s people, all saying different and contradictory things; nevertheless, I hold to this basic law, that, if men were governed by the Spirit, they would say the same thing, they would arrive at the same conclusion; and it is only the intrusion of the natural—either natural judgment, intellect, taking hold of the things of God, or natural desires and inclinations and

propensities and wishes and feelings—that results in this confusion of tongues among the Lord's people. If the natural life, mind, heart and will really did come under the power of the Cross and we came on to the ground where we are dead to ourselves and alive only in the spirit, we should be saying and thinking the same thing.

God has simple and very real—even if small and limited—testimonies where He has those who are led by the Spirit; He is able to say the same thing to them and the results are very fruitful. Desolation goes out and fruitfulness comes in when the mind of the Spirit possesses the children of God. They say the same thing; they are able to say—And the Lord said that to me as well! There is a lot in that.

Well, you see very early in this book a very big thing is taken up from the Old Testament and reversed. "First that which is natural; then that which is spiritual." The universality of the Spirit is declared. And, remember, with this goes the universality of the Church. The true Church is of this order.

And then, of course, in "Acts" we have the initiation of the universality of salvation; that is, initiation in the practical sense. Salvation is universal from the beginning, but here was the initiation of its outworking—for Jew and Gentile. Presently we move from Jerusalem up to Caesarea, and something happens in a Gentile company almost identical with what happened in a Jewish company—the Spirit falls, and that universality of the Spirit shows itself now in this, that God is no respecter of persons. All can be saved, Jew and Gentile. Salvation is inclusive; God has no favourites in the matter of salvation.

#### **The Spiritual Principle Behind Achan and Ananias and Sapphira**

Time permits us to touch on only one other thing, which is quite simple in itself. It is very soon in this book that we come upon that tragic incident of Ananias and Sapphira. We have now leapt a long way ahead in the Old Testament. Historically, there is much be-

tween what we have just said and this point, but no doubt here is a correspondence in spiritual principle. You remember Achan, and the Babylonish garment and the wedge of gold hidden in his tent. But that is not the whole point. When did it happen? That is the vital point. It happened when Israel had passed through Jordan, in which they, in type, forever parted with the carnal life. The passage of Jordan in type was that side of their union with Christ which spoke of death to the carnal life which had been predominant in the wilderness. It had all been the flesh, carnality, all through those years, and at last that had to be done away with, lock, stock and barrel. Jordan drew the line between the life of God's people carnally and their life spiritually. Over Jordan, the Spirit of God takes charge as Captain of the host of the Lord, and is the energy of everything from that time onward, testifying to the fact that here the flesh has given place to the Spirit, and they are now typically on spiritual ground. Achan contradicts that, the carnal life breaks out again, and swift and radical judgment takes place. Because we pass into a new day, O Ananias and Sapphira, what you might have done when you lived in the flesh you cannot do now. That is the meaning. You have come into another realm, the realm of things spiritual, and having been buried with Christ and raised with Him, you are supposed to have repudiated all the work of the flesh and its ambitions.

"Acts" being a book of principles shows what God's full thought is for life in the Spirit. This is seen on both its positive side and its negative. Ananias and Sapphira are examples of the negative aspect, showing what the Lord's attitude is toward a calculated action in the flesh when against such the Spirit has been so manifestly in action.

This, then, is a solemn appeal for life on a higher level, but it carries with it a curtailment of certain liberties. For all the values of such a life may the Lord give us the required empowerment and grace.

T.A.S.

## **For Boys and Girls**

### **Gospel Messages from the Antarctic (No. 4)**

"We behold . . . Jesus, . . . crowned . . ." (Heb. ii. 9).

"Run . . . the race . . . looking unto Jesus . . ." (Heb. xii. 1, 2).

"I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision" (Acts xxvi. 19).

ONE of the great dangers of Antarctic exploring is the blizzard. Often, with little warning, the snow begins to fall so thick and fast that a man cannot see his hand held out at arm's length. This is how our book describes a blizzard:—

"Outside the tent there is raging chaos. It is blowing a full gale: the air is full of falling



snow, and the wind drives this along and adds to it the loose snow which is lying on the surface of the ice. Fight your way a few steps away from the tent, and the tent will be lost to sight. Lose your sense of direction and there is nothing to guide you back. . . .”

One of our explorers nearly lost his life in such a blizzard. It was in the dark night and bitter cold of winter. He went out of the hut where the party lived, in order to attend to one of the scientific instruments that was fixed in the ice of the frozen sea not far away. A blizzard was blowing, but he thought he could safely make so short a journey, and so he set out. After walking about two hundred yards, however, he decided that conditions were so bad he had better turn back, and he did so, walking as he thought exactly in the direction from which he had come. After a while, to his surprise he found himself not back at the hut but close to an object on the ice which he recognised, and which he knew was some distance from the shore and not in his proper direction at all. He turned in what he thought must be the right direction, but he could see nothing, for the snow was like a thick blanket all round him, and it was quite dark. He walked on and on—and realised that he was completely lost.

“Hour after hour he staggered about, stumbling, tumbling, tripping, buffeted by the wind, sprawling through miles of punishing snow. He found an island, spent ages coasting along it, then lost it . . . he found another island (perhaps it was the same one again, he could not tell) and the same horrible, almost senseless, search went on. . . .” All this time he was being more and more numbed by the intense cold; his hand was frost bitten, his feet nearly so. There was little chance of saving his life if the blizzard continued; but hope revived when the snow eased for a brief period and he saw the moon. He remembered having seen it shining the previous night, and from its position in the sky he could make a rough guess at the direction in which the hut should be. So he set off; but the blizzard came down again and blotted out the moon once more. He stumbled on and found another island (was it the same one again?) and waited. Again came a lull, and the moon; and on he went. At last he saw a light burning. He went straight towards it—and found himself home at last. The light had been lighted by his friends at the hut who had been anxiously awaiting his return. When his troubles began he was only two hundred yards from the hut, but it had taken him over six hours to reach home and he found later that one of the islands

he had been travelling round was as much as four miles away.

It was seeing and following the light that saved him. He had thought he knew the way, he had tried to work out his own course, he had relied upon his memory and used his wits to the best of his ability; but these were not able to bring him to his goal. A light altogether outside of himself and different from his own thoughts and ideas had to shine for him, and when he followed *that* light all was well.

As a young man the apostle Paul (then named Saul) had an experience very like this. He set out on life's journey, and the one place he wanted to reach—the one thing he wanted to do—was to serve God as he ought. He thought he knew the way and he followed it quite confidently to begin with; but we have reason to think that after a while, like our explorer, he began to wonder if he was on the right track after all. But he pressed on, always hoping that he would reach the desired end. He did some extraordinary things in his efforts to serve God—he even persecuted and killed the followers of the Lord Jesus! He was quite sincere—he says “I verily thought that I ought. . . .” It shows us how a man can be in the dark, like the explorer in the blizzard, thinking he is going the right way and not knowing how far astray he is. But Saul did eventually reach “home” safely. What showed him the way there? Did someone talk to him and convince him he was wrong? Did he sit down and read in the Scriptures that he ought not to do certain things? Not at all—the remarkable thing is that he knew the Scriptures thoroughly and read them constantly, and thought he was acting in accordance with their teaching. Yes, he verily thought that he ought . . . ! But his thoughts, even about God's Word, were wrong and led him astray. When he began to realise this there must have been with him, as with our explorer, a deep cry in his heart for a light to shine and show him the right way. And then one day, quite suddenly, he saw a light—and he followed it and found he was “home.” His wanderings were over. He had suddenly come into the light of *God's* thoughts instead of his own, and everything was changed. You can read the story of it in the book of the Acts, chapters 9, 22 and 26.

What did he see? It was more than just a light—it was a Person; none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself in heaven. Paul afterwards called what he saw “the heavenly vision.” What he saw with his physical eyes soon faded away, but with the eyes of his heart

he continued to look upon it for the rest of his life—he was always beholding Jesus, crowned. As he thought and prayed about it its meaning grew more and more wonderful to him, and as he followed what he saw it seemed as if the light grew *in* him as well as before him. So in writing once about his experiences he said “it pleased God . . . to reveal his Son *in* me” (Gal. i. 15, 16). He saw more and more how foolish were his own thoughts and he gladly let them go and followed the new light wherever it led and whatever it cost. That is what he meant by saying “I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.”

Now I cannot even begin here to tell you the meaning of what Paul saw. But it is of the greatest importance that we should follow his example. We shall certainly not see the Lord Jesus with our physical eyes as Paul did (until we go to be with Him), but with the eyes of our heart we may and must see Him. Here are some things we can do about it:—

- (1) Humble our hearts before God and tell

Him that we need His light to guide us “home.”

- (2) Resolve that so far as we know how to do it we will “run . . . the race, . . . looking unto Jesus.”
- (3) Ask God to open the eyes of our heart so that we may really see “the heavenly vision” for ourselves.
- (4) Ask Him to show us more and more what that vision means, and to give us grace to be obedient to it, whatever it may cost.

Will you do this? He or she who most clearly sees and follows the heavenly vision will reach the “South Pole” first.

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,  
 Look full in His wonderful face;  
 And the things of earth will grow  
strangely dim
 In the light of His glory and grace.

G.P.

## “God Hath Spoken”

### III

#### The Transcendent Thought of Sonship

**H**AVING, in our consideration of the message of the “Letter to the Hebrews,” identified the all-inclusive object as the fulness of Christ, we proceed to crystallise that object, or see that it is here crystallised, into the Divine meaning of sonship. This thought runs right through the letter, but at points the keynote is struck with particular emphasis.

- i. **THE SON.** “*Hath at the end . . . spoken . . . in his Son*” (marg.: *a son; lit. sonwise*). i. 2.  
 “*Thou art my Son.*” i. 5.  
 “*But of the Son he saith.*” i. 8.  
 “*Christ as a son, over his (God’s) house.*” iii. 6.
- ii. **THE SONS.** “. . . bringing many sons unto glory.” ii. 10.  
 “*My son, regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord . . . and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth . . . God dealeth with you as with sons . . . the Father of our spirits.*” xii. 5, 6, 7, 9 (see also “brethren,” “children”).  
 “*Ye are come . . . to the church of the firstborn . . . enrolled in heaven.*” xii. 22, 23.

The central truth then, around which all else circles, and in the light of which all else must be read, is the mystery or hidden nature of

sonship. There is no greater thing in all Divine revelation than the thought and purpose of sonship. But this letter shows (as do other parts of the New Testament) that sonship is not an initial relationship but an ultimate one. It is not what is meant by being born of God or being a child of God, although sonship is implicit in that, but it is the maturity and therefore responsibility of those born of God; it is just that motive of all the exhortations, entreaties, encouragements, and warnings in the letter, at one point set over against unduly delayed growth in the words “Let us go on to full growth,” vi. 1. Let us hasten to mention that we are not thinking or speaking of deity. We are not called to that unique Sonship which belongs to Christ as Son of God in terms of Godhead, but we keep strictly to what is meant by the use made of the words of the eighth Psalm in chapter two of this letter with its backward relation to Adam and its forward relation to Christ and the “many sons,” “brethren,” “children,” “partners.” So then, sonship means spiritual full growth which carries with it the placing in responsibility to govern the world to come (ii. 5).

The great implication, if not obvious statement, of this letter as a whole is that all “children” of God will not “go on” to realise the full meaning of their birth, but, while they may not lose their life, they may lose their “calling” or the full intention of

their birth.

Thus, we are able, by recognising the governing object of this letter, to link up with those things which show what sonship means. There are many such links; we can take but two of them.

The first obvious link is between "Hebrews" and the fourth chapter of John's Gospel.

### The New "Hour" of the Son

*"... the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the FATHER... the hour cometh, and NOW IS, when the true worshippers shall worship the FATHER in spirit and truth: ... God is Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit..."* (John iv. 21-24). (The emphasis is ours.)

Now, everyone knows that the all-governing object of John's writings was to bring out Christ's Sonship. A study of relevant words—"Father," "Son," etc., will serve as an initial indication of this.

But a second unmistakable characteristic of those writings is the essentially spiritual nature of everything in relation to Christ. Here is a simple example. With Christ a new "hour," or day, or dispensation has come, and in this new day geography, place, material building, traditional association, religious centre, or ecclesiastical hierarchy have nothing whatever to do with it. It is now an inner relationship of a spiritual nature between Father and son. So chapter four follows chapter three in John. "Hebrews" just develops John iv and gives the so-much-greater range and content of its implication. Thus, in the first place, sonship is a heavenly thing. It takes its rise in heaven: "born from above" (John iii. 3, marg.). Then it is an inward thing like a heavenly well, springing up unto life eternal (John iv. 14), and it is not in any way earthbound. "Neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem." It is not historical but eternal; not temporal, but spiritual. As the letter to the Hebrews so quickly passes from the personal to the corporate, from the individual to the family, so in "John" there is a distinct point at which there is a transition from the many personal and individual incidents to the gathering of all those separate features into a corporate company in which the full glory of the Son and of sonship is to be expressed. This consummation is reached in chapter xvii.

Another clearly defined link between "Hebrews" and the Gospels is seen in the Transfiguration, and this sees sonship in its consummation, as what we have just said sets forth its initiation and nature.

### The Consummation of Sonship

On the mount of transfiguration three things are noted.

- a. Moses and Elijah; corresponding to "divers portions and in divers manners" (Heb. i. 1).
- b. Jesus glorified; corresponding to "we see Jesus, ... crowned with glory and honour" (Heb. ii. 9). (See also II Pet. i. 16-18.)
- c. "Hear ye him"; corresponding to "God ... hath at the end ... spoken ... in his Son" (Heb. i. 2).

Thus we have,

- a. A new dispensation:
- b. Taking its character from Jesus in heaven, glorified.
- c. The absolute fulness and finality of God's work and speech in His Son.

Let us here remind ourselves of the supreme conflict that has ever circled round this matter of sonship. In the case of the Lord Jesus Himself it was the focal point of all the fierce controversy and bitter hatred. It was the point of Satan's personal and direct attack: "If thou be the Son." Later, demons referred to it through their victims of possession. It was the occasion of the Jewish assault, and it headed up in the combined assault of devil, demons, and men, issuing in His crucifixion. Paul not only regarded the Jews as responsible for His death, but said the "principalities and powers" invested Him in the cross, and He stripped them off (Colossians ii. 15).

The battle was carried on against the Church, and almost every New Testament letter has as its object the urge and constraint of believers not to stop short at spiritual infancy or immaturity, but to go on to fulness. This fulness is what is meant by and involved in sonship. There is nothing so feared and hated by Satan and his powers as sonship in its full attainment and expression. As "Prince of this world," having wrested the kingdom and dominion from Adam, he loses it to the Son of God—the Son of man; and the full and universal manifestation of that loss is to come with "the manifestation of the sons of God," that Body of Christ which is "the fulness of him," the "partakers of a heavenly calling" to have dominion over the world to come (Rom. viii. 19; Eph. i. 23; Heb. iii. 1, ii. 5).

Any ministry or instrumentality which has real spiritual full growth and sonship as its anointed function will meet what such has ever met; firstly from the enemy himself directly and nakedly, then from whatever direction and means he can find available. If he cannot *directly* destroy, he will seek Balaam's method of subterfuge. His one persistent method



through the ages has been to divert the people of God from the Son to a system.

The Letters to the Hebrews, the Galatians, and the Romans are outstanding instruments of God in relation to this very thing. Thus, early in "Hebrews," in bringing in the sons with the Son, mention is made of a matter which is much more fully developed later. It is that of

### Death in Relation to Sonship and Spiritual Fulness

The inclusive statement in this connection is in Chap. ii, vers.: 9, 14 and 15:

*"That . . . he should taste death for (in behalf of) every man." "That through death he might bring to nought him that had the power (hold) of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."*

The question of life and death is later taken up and opened out in relation to priestly function. Aaron and his successors were unable to bring anything to fulness and finality because death broke in in every case and cut their work short. Melchizedek is then introduced as type of another priesthood. "Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God . . . after the power of an endless life" (vii. 3, 16 and context).

You will thus see that sonship, eternal life, and spiritual fulness are linked together.

Death is the great enemy of spiritual fulness, but death is—in this letter and everywhere else—not just a physical matter. Israel is here spoken of as having died in the wilderness and is used as a warning to Christians. But the warnings have to do with the *purpose* of salvation in its fulness. Death is a spiritual thing, and it is an enemy ever seeking to ambush the child of God. So this whole letter is one solid and comprehensive document and treatise on the fact that spiritual life can be curtailed, arrested, and thwarted of its possibilities by the child of God being brought down, even in a religious way, to an earthly position with all the trappings of a bygone dispensation, and losing the essentially heavenly and spiritual position. "Dead works" the writer calls them (vi. 1).

In chapter i, verse 5 we have a quotation from the second Psalm related immediately to sonship in Christ.

"Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." That quotation is made again in chapter v, verse 5, in relation to His endless-life Priesthood. In Acts xiii. 33, the same quota-

tion is made as prophetic evidence of the resurrection of Christ, and thus, sonship and resurrection are linked. This does not mean that Christ was not Son before the resurrection, but the New Testament shows that in resurrection there is a feature of sonship which was not there before, namely that Christ is "the firstborn among many brethren" in resurrection. As Peter puts it "hath begotten us . . . by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." We are not thereby incorporated into Christ as Son of God in the sense of deity, but as Son of man in a new creation family.

For the moment, then, the point is that the new life of resurrection union with Christ as the principle of sonship must not be put into the old wine-skins of earthly traditions and systems, but into the new wine-skins of an entirely heavenly and spiritual order. This was probably the occasion of this letter. It was possibly written as an appeal to the strong section of Hebrew Christians in Jerusalem who found the ever-widening trend of Christianity too much for their conservative habits of Judaistic thought. As the cleavage between the Temple and the Synagogue on the one hand, and the Church and the Apostles on the other, became more marked, the Judaisers were inclined to snap the new ties for the old. The new wine was bursting the old wine-skins, and, like many to-day, they were not prepared for that. But the issues were, and are, infinite.

Thus we have arrived at one of those infinite issues which are exercising most Christians and Christian bodies to-day, the issue of

### Fulness of Life in Christ

Yes, life in fulness is the question. Many bodies of Christians who have a great past and a great tradition are deeply concerned with the inadequacy or lack of life amongst them to-day. This poverty of life is leading to great organised efforts, largely outside of the churches, to try to bring fulness about. Its lack has been the occasion for the abnormal development of many spurious and pseudo-spiritual movements and teachings. For want of it multitudes are passing by the churches as things which do not count. In many ways the great enemy has triumphed against the Church by countering its very life impact and testimony. A major and largely inclusive way of this achievement is the specific point of our letter. Make Christianity into another Judaism, i.e., an earthly religious system of precepts and practices, and you have made it dead! Is not this the point at chapter vi. 1-6? I am not one of those who believe that the Apostle was there referring to Jewish ordinances. Some of

my reasons for this are these. Chapter vi. 1-6 must be read strictly in conjunction with chapter v. 12-13. "The rudiments of the first principles (or beginning) of the oracles of God" are the same as "the first principles of Christ," linked together by the "Wherefore." Jewish ordinances were not the first principles of Christ. They were the "dead works" referred to in the phrase "Repentance from dead works." "The teaching of baptisms" does not refer to Jewish "washings." It is the *teaching* as to the difference between John's Baptism (or any other) and baptism into Christ. Acts xix. 1-6 ought to settle this conclusively; and note the context of xviii. 25. (What a pity that the chapters are divided where they are, instead of after xviii. 23!) In this same place (Acts xix. 6) the "laying on of hands" (Heb. vi. 2) is seen as a doctrine of Christ, not a Jewish ordinance. No, the point of the Apostle is that, having laid this sixfold foundation we should "go on to full growth." Life only begins in the foundation; its fulness requires

the whole building. The peril is that even the first principles can become another legal system imposed upon people, and thus the things intended to lead to fulness of life may be made an arrest of life. Satan is very clever.

The recovery of life and its constant increase unto final fulness will only be as we get away from mere tradition and earthliness to a new living apprehension of Christ in His fulness as a Divine Representation of God's thoughts for His people; away from types, figures, symbols, to spiritual realities. Even if there are to be expressions of "first principles" they must come out of the living reality, and not be mere forms and things in themselves. We must do nothing with a view to perpetuating forms of doctrine and practice, but the expression must be that of life, and the spiritual meaning and value of everything must be ever growing. Only so shall we "go on to full growth."

T.A.S.

To be continued.

## The Seen—or the Unseen ?

*Reading: Gen. xiii. 10-18; xiv. 18-23;*

*Matt. vi. 19-34; II Cor. iv. 16-18;*

*Col. iii. 2-4.*

**I**N the narrative of the parting of the ways between Abraham and Lot there is revealed a matter of the greatest possible significance for every one of us—namely, that of the solemn necessity for a choice between two levels or realms of spiritual life and effectiveness. The issue is one affecting Christians, not the un-saved. There must be either an utter and wholehearted choosing of the unseen, eternal and ultimate things as those upon which the heart is set, or else a preferring of things seen, present and tangible—not necessarily *instead of* God, but as an accompaniment to a life which in some measure takes Him into account. These two alternative ways, one represented by Abraham and the other by Lot, may for simplicity be called the way of faith and the way of sight or sense. The conflict between these two ways is an old one—it began when "the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise." Yes, this issue is an old one, and yet a very present and up-to-date one, which none of us can escape; and it is very needful that each of us should know which of these two alternative, and soon widely diverging, courses we are taking. In the case of Abraham and Lot there had been strife, and now had come the

parting of the ways; and in their choices the two men stand revealed. Representing as they do two altogether different levels and ways of life they cannot continue together. Abraham's words are very clear—"Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou take the right hand, then I will go to the left." The quarrel of the herdsmen was incidental; the sequel shows that the real crux was a radical difference between the two masters. So we see that Abraham represents the man of faith, the man who has staked his whole life, resources and prospects for time and eternity upon God. For him there are no other considerations or dependencies; everything else flows out of a background where God Himself is the one all-embracing desire and confidence. Lot, on the other hand, represents the man who, though a Christian—for Lot had a knowledge of the Lord and is spoken of as "righteous"—has not made God alone his ground of hope and confidence. He does look at the earthly considerations and prefers to have something a little more tangible and (as he would doubtless express it) more "practical" to go on. Of course he does not leave the Lord out, but he has as his life basis God *and* other things that appeal to him as good and even needful.

### The Divine Purpose and the Way of Faith

Now the significant thing is that throughout

Scripture it is the men of faith who alone count in relation to the Divine purpose, and they alone who have the full Divine approval and blessing and eternal usefulness. The others—and what tragedies many of them are!—appear on the scene almost incidentally, and as part of the setting for the record of real faith in other lives, and then they disappear. Lot appears before us as a “justified” man, one saved from destruction, but as to Divine purpose he is a nonentity. The key to spiritual and eternal issues is Abraham. Lot beheld all the Plain of Jordan, well watered; Abraham saw it too, but he saw something else. His choice was God and the will of God at the cost of all other considerations.

Dear friends, these two ways are very, very different: they involve all the difference between heaven and earth as to spiritual value and eternal outcome. To choose the way of sight, of present convenience and gratification, means loss now and eternally. This no doubt we realise, but for many of us the weakening thing is our failure to appreciate that to desire the higher way of utter faith, and yet in some degree or other to be in bondage to the lower way of self-consideration and lack of full confidence in God, is a paralyzing thing. Is it not just here that we are so often being tested? There is the pull of the outward, the appeal to our natural life of this present world of sense. The appeal varies according to our background, temperament, make-up; but certain things—even ideas, associations, sights and sounds—bring the power of some influence to bear upon us. It is the lure of “a Plain . . . well watered.” If we trifle just here, give way a little, we are weakened in our walk with God. It saves so much time to be quick and definite in rejecting those overtures, and, knowing where we stand, to say “no.” The words of the Lord Jesus in Matthew, chapter six, are so true and searching. “Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” Is it not true that if we love the one—i.e. the world, our own souls, other things—we do hate the other? There is a secret resentment against the Lord when these things are withheld from us; a terrible thought, but true—the heart is divided. But on the positive side, if we love Him and “hold to” Him, we find that something happens in us so that we even *despise* the other—we realise how hollow it is, in spite of its momentary appeal, and can, like Abraham, refuse all the offers of the King of Sodom, and be perfectly content with what comes from God.

Now the point of all this is that if we are to be established in the way of Divine purpose and fruitfulness, this great basic choice between

faith and sight needs to be a settled thing in our life. When it is not so there will always be an element of uncertainty in the life, something not altogether safe, simply because the heart has not really come to rest in the conclusion that God is altogether trustworthy and true to His Word, whatever happens.

I believe, difficult as it sounds, that the Lord does want us to be on sure ground in this matter, and His Word now is one of encouragement to us to take that ground without delay. How then is it to be? What is the secret of Abraham’s glorious detachment from dependence either on the well-watered Plain or on the gifts of the King of Sodom?

#### **Faith’s Secret—an Utter Committal to God**

The answer is first of all in the fact that in Abraham’s life the altar was now the foundation of all else. You will note that chapter thirteen of Genesis both begins and ends with an altar. In the first instance the altar represented his recovery of ground lost by a weakening of faith a little earlier. To us who so easily fail it is comforting to note that even with Abraham there had been failure in this matter of faith. When things became difficult he had gone down to Egypt, and only a special Divine intervention saved him from disastrous consequences. But, being a man who in spite of everything really wanted the Lord beyond all else, when he saw what had happened he knew the way back—the altar. After that thorough adjustment with the Lord came the separating from Lot, and then yet again he built an altar—a fresh reaffirmation of an utter committal and abandonment to God, whatever the cost.

The altar of course always represents the Cross of the Lord Jesus, and the building of it betokens on the part of the one concerned appreciation and acceptance of what the Cross involves. The challenge for us is simply this—is the altar yet a settled thing as the basis of our very life? Have we ever really said to the Lord with all our heart, Lord, I am tired of my own ways and will and ideas, and from now onwards I want everything really to be the expression of Thyself and not of myself. I want “not I, but Christ” to be made true in my life, and I now commit myself wholly to Thee and to Thy grace to work in me to that end. If some such utter committal as that is the secret ground of our relationship with the Lord, all else begins to follow. In Abraham’s case he was now committed—he had lifted up his hand unto God Most High and now, separated unto God and in a sense alone with God, he was in a condition to deal very powerfully and effectually with the practical situations that arose.



In passing, we may say that all powerlessness and ineffectiveness in spiritual life—and that means too in dealing with practical every-day problems and situations—is due in the first instance to an inadequate position in the background with God. But Abraham had the background, and it was very quickly seen—in the battle with the Kings—with what tremendous effect he could come into situations among men and influence their course. Yes, the Cross is the basis of all abiding effectiveness.

### Faith Triumphant Under Test

But now we come to the next phase, which is inevitable—the testing of the new position, the appeal once again of things other than what is altogether in God and from Him. But with Abraham the position is secure; in the language of Matthew vi. 24, he “holds to” the Lord and can despise the proffered things of the King of Sodom. “I have lift up my hand unto the Lord, God Most High . . . I will not take a thread nor a shoelatchet . . .”

Here is our help and comfort. If we also have lifted up our hands unto the Lord—if we have in secret fought this matter out, and decided that the Lord is more to us than all else and worthy of absolute trust—there is an inner position and resource with which to meet the enemy. We know where we stand because the matter has been thoroughly settled, and on the ground of the Cross we are able to say what the Lord Jesus said with such utterness and absoluteness of truth—“the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.”

May the Lord help each one of us to come to a very definite position with Him in this great matter of where our dependence lies. Much is then going to follow.

### Faith's Effect—Ascendancy Over the Enemy and Settled Satisfaction of Heart

We have said that when the test comes there

is grace to enable us to stand and to give the answer of faith; but how about our daily attitude to life and its demands?

The answer is in the deliberate setting of the heart day by day on the “things which are not seen,” “the things that are above, where Christ is.” This is something to be deliberately and purposefully done—we do not drift into it, for the down-drag of the earth is ever present. The Lord is calling us to nothing less than to be heavenly in our attitude and valuation in the midst of a life on earth which properly necessitates much occupation with earthly things—the home, business affairs, dealing with the men of this world. How is this ever to be? If the position has been settled already in heart it will increasingly be true that the heart and mind do tend to the values that are spiritual and eternal—things are seen in their right proportion.

Finally, we shall discover that, just as the way of confidence in the things of sight and sense militates against spiritual growth, the true life of dependence begets spiritual measure and is the very means whereby Christ is formed in us as our very life and resource. “Be not anxious for your life,” “Your heavenly Father knoweth,” are words to which we need to give their full weight and meaning. As we do so, and on the ground that we have put our whole life into the Lord's hands, we shall not only find increasingly that “He is faithful,” and that all His paths are peace, but also we shall become more and more available to Him as vessels for the display of His glory, both in time and in eternity. It is “while we look at the things . . . not seen” that the glory is being wrought. The eternal purposes of God are bound up with men who find their all in Himself alone.

C.J.B.H.

## Things That Differ

### The Disaster Resulting from Confusing Divine Truth

*The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet” (Acts ii. 34-35).*

*“Jesus standing on the right hand of God.” The Son of man standing on the right hand of God” (Acts vii. 55-56).*

*“If Christ is in you”; “. . . his Spirit that dwelleth in you” (Rom. viii. 10, 11).*

It is a matter that should be clearly understood by all Christians that to confuse the

truths of God is very often to nullify their value in the life of a believer, and worse than that, to bring about a condition which is a positive contradiction of what is fundamental to true Christianity. With great seriousness then we seek to discriminate between the different *essential* aspects of the truth, and the above passages represent one of the instances of immense importance. Although there are three quotations given, there are only two really separate matters signified. The first two are but two sides of one thing, but while those two and the third constitute a *full* Christian

life, and are essential to such spiritual fulness, they are *two distinctly different things which must on no account be allowed to overlap.*

### Christ in Heaven : (a) "Sitting"

In the first two Christ is represented as in heaven at God's right hand, but in two postures, "sitting" and "standing." There is no contradiction here. We must remember that we are in the presence of language which is figurative. In His "sitting"—"made to sit" (Eph. i. 20): "Sit thou" (Acts ii. 34)—there is the Divine attestation that His work was complete and perfect, and that as Son of Man He had won and inherited the place of absolute honour and glory. "We see Jesus . . . crowned with glory and honour" (Heb. ii. 9). The right hand is first the place of honour. It is of great significance that the new dispensation commencing with Pentecost begins with Christ *sitting* at God's right hand. All begins with a work completed! The seventh day—the day of rest—becomes the first day. The colours of the rainbow end where they began. It is the law of the octave, the eighth is as the first and marks a new beginning. Our Christian life begins at the point where the work is already completed in our Representative Son of Man. There is nothing to add to it, either in need or possibility. Immediately we try to contribute something to it we *in effect, for ourselves*, nullify it all, and God stands back. We shall come back to that again presently.

### Christ in Heaven : (b) "Standing"

With regard to the second posture of Christ as in heaven—"standing on the right hand of God"—this is seen when the Church is in the conflict, or when things are needing to be done for her, not in the sense of her justification, but for her defence and support in adversity. Thank God, there is One in the glory standing up for us, and He will see to it that the enemy overreaches himself, as in Stephen's case. Much could be said about that, but it is not our subject just now.

We pass straight to the third position of Christ:

### "Christ in You"

Any mental difficulty as to two so widely separated locations of Christ at the same time is got over by the further words "By his Spirit that dwelleth in you." Christ and the Holy Spirit are one.

Here we cross over to another phase of things entirely, and the only link between the two is that the second is the outworking of the first.

"Christ in you" is unto our being "conformed to the image of his (God's) Son" (Rom. viii. 29). It is to work in us that which has been perfected by Him. It is the whole realm of our being made Christ-like; having all the faculties and features of Christ, which are resident in the new life received at new birth, brought to maturity. Every spiritual and Christly virtue has to be brought to full growth; love, meekness, goodness, gentleness, intelligence, etc.; so that we are not just theoretical and doctrinaire Christians, but real ones, spiritually responsible and accountable, with the root of the matter within. This, however, necessitates much discipline; what is called "chastening." This discipline, which employs many forms of adversity and trial, has the effect of bringing to light what we really are in ourselves, and it is an ugly picture. Our *own* features do not improve as we go on. We know ever more what poor, wretched, and deplorable men we are, and—but for the grace of God—hopeless. But something is being done deep down which will show itself in due time to the glory of God.

### Confusion Leads to Paralysis

But here is the point of our peril. Let no child of God whose heart is toward the Lord, who has not *deliberately* and wilfully and knowingly resisted the Holy Ghost, ever for a single moment confuse "chastening" and its accompaniments of self-discovery with judgment. You do this at the peril of the joy of your salvation. If a child of God who loves the Lord and wants nothing more than to be well-pleasing unto Him should think that he is under the judgment and condemnation of God because he is finding out how evil his own heart is, that thought carries with it the suggestion that Christ did *not* die for our sins; that the wrath of God was *not* exhausted on Him and by Him when He was made sin *for us*. It goes back behind a completed work and Christ's *sitting* at God's right hand, and contradicts and denies the very bed-rock of our salvation—justification by faith. Satan is again *given* the place of power so far as such an one is concerned by such a thought. No, a thousand times No! Although I may discover unimagined depths of iniquity in my own heart, if I have put faith in Jesus Christ as the bearer away of my sin and myself, His perfections are placed to my account and God sees me in Him. This will never, never, become to me an occasion for living complacently on the ground of what I am in myself. Without working through all the reasons for and the nature of Christian growth, with all the values in service

which issue from it, let me keep on this emphasis. There are so many dear children of God who have so confused the two things mentioned as to be in an altogether negative condition. They are paralysed by their sense of sinfulness. They have seen the need for a subjective application of the Cross of Christ, and have recognised that when Christ died, they died in Him; but the realisation that the work is not yet completed *in* them has resulted in their living in a world of death, and knowing little or nothing of the fact which cannot really be separated from union in death with Christ, that is, union in resurrection and exaltation. If such an one should read this, may I say to you that if you are unhappy, worried, depressed, or negative, uncertain, lacking in absolute assurance, and therefore limited in your usefulness to the Lord, you have entirely misunderstood and misapprehended the truth of union with Christ. You are really a contradiction to what you claim to believe. It would be better that you put back your subjective truth until you have got fully and firmly established in the glorious *facts* of what Christ

sitting at God's right hand really means *for* you. Nevertheless, it is possible to be moving triumphantly and strongly in the path of a deep *inward* work of the Spirit, while knowing utter dependence and weakness.

Let me appeal to you again that you do not let these two things become confused. If you come upon fresh realisations of your own worthlessness, say, Yes, that belongs to the realm of God's work in me, and He will deal with that, but it makes no difference whatever to my acceptance in the Beloved: *so long as I do not condone my wrong, excuse it, and accept it.* Remember, dear friend, that God demands the first ground, the ground of our settled faith in the *finished* and perfected work of Christ, in order to make any beginning inside of us. It would be fatal for Him to touch the inside had He not got that objective faith. We must be careful that we do not upset God's order and bring ourselves on to false ground. This can only result in destroyed testimony and much gratification to Satan at the Lord's expense *in us.*

T.A-S.

## “The Saints of Caesar's Household”

### Phil. iv. 22

Altogether apart from any lessons to be drawn from this statement, it is one which is most intriguing and provocative of interesting speculation. Already in this same letter the Apostle has referred to his bonds being manifest throughout the whole Praetorium. This was the place of Caesar's bodyguard. Evidently through his contact with the soldiers their report of him was well known among the thousand Lifeguardsmen of the Emperor. Then they, in turn, were in close touch with the Emperor's household, and, whether they were or were not Paul's converts, there were “saints,” believers *there*, and somehow Paul had close touch with them, although he lived in “his own hired house.” Was this through believing soldiers, or did those saints run all risks in visiting him? It is all so full of suggestion and wonder.

But our purpose in referring to it is to catch the significance of the phrase as a statement, and to obtain from it some guidance and comfort. “Saints in *Caesar's* household.” There was the place of positive paganism and of ruthless antagonism to Christianity! There was the place where everything was against Christ and all that represented Him. How could these people allow themselves to be em-

ployed and sustained there? How could they give their lives, their strength and faithful service to this system and its ruler so false to Christ? What about the “unequal yoke”?

How many young believers have come up against such a problem and question. How many have decided the matter by concluding that it was all wrong to do such a thing, and so they have left their work and sought only to serve and take wages where all was, at least, not antagonistic to Christianity. In doing this many have made terrible difficulties for themselves and have got into an entirely false position. And if it should be said that the saints referred to were probably slaves and had no option, this is only begging the question, for martyrdom should not be shunned if being false to Christ is involved in our position. And yet there seems to be no such inconsistency hinted at here. The Apostle just makes a statement as though it was a thing taken for granted that there could be “saints in Caesar's household.” Well, let us also assume that such a thing can be. Let us not raise questions where Paul does not do so. But let us see what governs such a position.

Putting aside the mental question, the ghost of legalism, let us ask whether ever a saint has lived a triumphant life in a sphere so in-



imical to Christ, and whether the Lord has ever had saints being maintained in such a system. We shall be hard put to it to prove that it has not been so. The points which govern this matter are, is it impossible to live in fellowship with Christ there? May not the Lord want a testimony in such a place? Is it really a matter of an *inward* controversy with the Lord which completely arrests our spiritual growth, or is it something that has been put to us in a legalistic way by others? *Is it to our interest to stay there, or only to the Lord's?* Did not the presence of those saints in Caesar's household speak of the very sovereignty and Lordship of Christ over Caesar himself? For

while, perhaps, upstairs Caesar was thinking hard and cruel thoughts about, and planning destructive measures against, the Christians in his empire far afield, some of them were downstairs cooking his dinner. The Lord can outwit Caesar and laugh at him. Those saints were there as evidence that Jesus is Lord, even in Caesar's household.

Don't leave Caesar's household until you are sure that it is no longer possible to be a Christian there; but don't let it be just negative, see to it that the justification for your being there is that you are a positive answer to Caesar's challenge to Christ!

Selected

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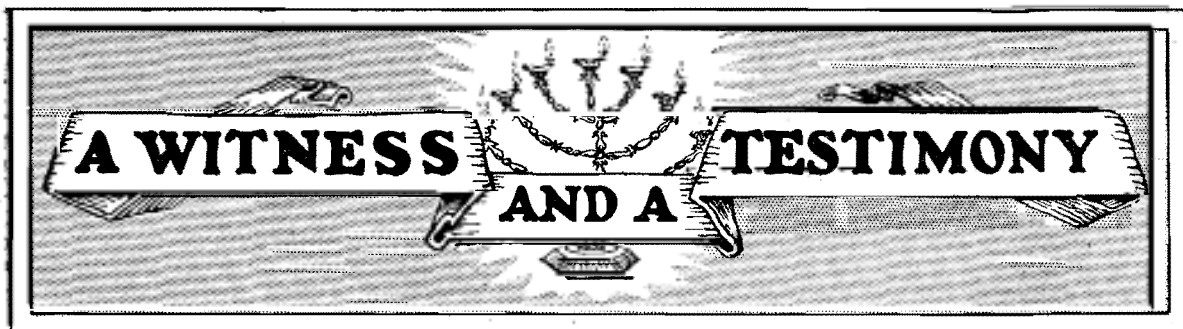
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SEPTEMBER—OCTOBER, 1947.

No. 5, Vol. 25.

## Four Greatnesses of Divine Revelation

### V.

#### THE GREATNESS OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST

*"The bread of God is that which cometh down out of heaven, and giveth life unto the world. . . I am the bread of life . . . I am come down from heaven . . . I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; yea and the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world. . . Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves. . . my flesh is true meat, and my blood is true drink . . . This is the bread which came down out of heaven"* (John vi. 33, 35, 38, 51, 53, 55, 58).

*"That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God"* (Eph. iii. 17-19).

As the Lord enables, we shall now seek to recognize the link and the transition from Christ through the Cross to ourselves—that is, to the Lord's people. As we have been thinking of the greatness of Christ, there have been some things which came out as to His Person. Firstly, in connection with sonship,

we thought about His eternity—the eternal Sonship; then at the other end, we thought of Him as the Son of man. Son of God eternal, Son of man in time; Son of God in heaven, Son of man on earth; and we have been trying to understand the greatness contained in those capacities. We have thought about the greatness of the Cross. One thing we have said about Christ is that He does not stand in solitary isolation as outside of our universe, but the revelation of Him—even in His eternal Sonship, as well as in every other capacity—is intended to show that He stands closely associated with us, with man. You will remember that we have said that the eternal Sonship of Christ is no matter of concern to us if it is something in itself; we are not very interested if it is not in any way going to affect us. Therefore the fact that it is the very substance of revelation to man shows that God is interested that man should know, and that with a great purpose. God does not show us these things just for the sake of letting us have a look at something very wonderful. He reveals with an object in view, a big but very practical object, and He says, in effect, Now, this concerns you, you are bound up with this, you are related to it. So that the greatness of Christ as Son, both of God and of man, is brought by the New Testament down to a practical living relationship with us. He, the Son, is going to bring many sons to glory. He, the Son of man, is the firstborn of a new creation; and in His manhood, after His



likeness, a new creation is coming back to God, to be presented to God in Him. Well, that is all common ground, but we must get to the inner, practical meaning of it all.

### God's Eternal Thought of Sonship Secured in Christ

We have spoken about the eternity of the Son and of our participation in the eternal life which is His. What really does that mean? Does it just convey to your minds the idea of endless duration, something without beginning and without end? That is vague, and hardly helpful. What is the real, practical meaning and value of that as a revelation, as something brought to us? Well, what it means is this, that sonship is a thought, a conception, in the mind of God before we were made, that which was to be transferred to a creation. That is, it goes before time, and for us time simply means this present material world order. Time for us begins when God makes a material creation and puts the heavenly bodies in their place to govern years and months and days and the seasons of the year, and so on. That is time for us; it belongs, therefore, to the material creation. But get back behind time and you come to God's thought, which is outside of time. Call it timeless if you like, call it eternal. It is outside of time, before time was, and it was to give character to time, give nature to creation. That which He would make would, in His intention, take its character from this and would, therefore, in its conception, in its idea, as well as in its nature, be something related to the timeless thought of God. Now, Christ is that.

But what, again, is the practical meaning of that to us now? Oh, this—Christ has that eternal pre-time thought of God perfected; Christ stands to govern everything created, and to see that time has no power to destroy that. Nothing which can come into time can eventually dismiss that, because that is eternal and stands there governing all time. Eventually things are bound, with the timelessness of God, to come back to that original idea. The creation in time may go leagues and leagues further from God's idea, it may move completely out of its orbit; but time shall be no more, time has no power finally to dismiss that. In Christ it is secured before ever time was, and eventually it is bound to be realized. The creation will come back to the timeless thought of God, and it will be shown that nothing that has ever entered into time has had power finally to change that. That is tremendous, that is the practical value of sonship. Sonship is an eternal idea, and eventually the creation will come to sonship. There

will be that eventually which will be sonship embodied in creation, in a people, and that will be what God ever thought and determined.

### God's Eternal Thought Secured in the Cross

But how can that be? There is the eternal fact, and here is time; and here are conditions of time; and here are we as found in this creation. We are far from that eternal thought. How can that be realized? Between the eternal thought as perfected in that Son and the ultimate realization of that thought stands the Cross. The Cross with one arm reaches back to eternity, to that thought, that purpose of God; with the other arm it reaches out to eternity yet to be, the consummation of it. The Cross is the bridge through all time between the eternities, to take up the purpose on the one hand, and to secure it as a realization on the other hand. It is in the Cross that the eternal thought of God concerning the Son and the sons is made possible and is secured—here is the greatness of the Cross in the sense of the eternity of the Cross. That is the meaning of such a phrase as "the Lamb . . . slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. xiii. 8). Time is anticipated, and all that could and would come in with time, so contrary to that thought, is anticipated in the Lamb slain in the thought of God from the foundation of the world. The Cross bridges it all. So, when we come into a faith union with Christ as crucified to all that has come in with time—the change of man's nature and character, the change of the world and of the character of creation—as we stand on the one side of that Cross in a faith identification with Him in death to that change, to all that disruption and denial and contradiction of the Divine conception, and on the other side in a faith identification with Him as risen triumphant over all that has come in with time, we receive the gift of timeless life, eternal life, in Jesus Christ our Lord. Or, to put it this way, we are then found in Christ, *that* Christ, from eternity. We have been lifted out of time and what time means now—for time now means disruption, disorder, corruption, and is only another word for the reign of death which puts a limit to life and begins at once to say, So far, no farther. That is death, that is time. In His death, He has destroyed all the conditions which time represents, He has taken it all away, and we are linked with Him in His eternity. Sonship—received potentially through the Holy Spirit in new birth, and realized through the Holy Spirit's continual operation in our maturing—is something which is the fulfilment of an eternal thought of God, the realization of all that God

ever thought about us; and the Cross is the point at which all that is made possible—nay, in Christ, is already secured. How great is the Cross!

### God's Heavenly Man

Following that (and it is only saying the same thing again, putting the emphasis on another word) here we have in this Gospel by John—"I am the living bread which *came down out of heaven*": "I am *come down from heaven*." Here is a phrase reiterated almost monotonously. Eternal, yes; that is the reach backward. Now, "from heaven"—that is the reach upward. "I am come down from heaven"—what does that mean? Christ said things which are completely mysterious until the Holy Spirit interprets them to the heart. He speaks about the Son of man Who is *in heaven* (John iii. 13). While He is saying the very words He is on the earth, yet He says, "The Son of man, who is in heaven." What does He mean? He simply means, as the later New Testament shows us, that He is not of this creation, He is not produced by the ordinary racial means on this earth, He does not come into being along the ordinary line of generation in Adam. "I am come down from heaven." The essential and deepest reality about Christ is that He is of a different order. Yes, He is born of Mary, but He is born of the Holy Ghost, in a unique way. Something has operated so that it can be said of Him before His birth "the holy thing which is begotten of thee . . ." (Luke I. 35)—a completeness of holiness which is the product of the intervention of God the Holy Ghost, cutting off from the inheritance of this fallen creation; and it is true that, by the Holy Ghost come down from heaven, He has come down from heaven. In a word, He is of another order of human beings; there is that about Him which is unique and different from all other men; there is not another like Him. "I am come down from heaven"

That, again, is God's thought—a certain kind of humanity which is not found in time and on this earth as we know it, a mankind which is not the one familiar to us; a different order, something outside of this realm and this race of mankind altogether. We are "fore-ordained to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom. viii. 29). You and I are to be of a different order altogether from the one to which we belong by nature. This order to which we belong now in this creation is not God's thought at all; it has gone wrong, it has fallen right out of the Divine recognition and acceptance. It is something other, it is confused, contaminated, tangled, poisoned.

This One from heaven is the representation, the embodiment and the inclusiveness of what God intended man to be. There is this creation at one end, and at the other end "conformed to the image of his Son," made like Him in resurrection; different, spiritually, within—with all the differences. Yes, but only in embryo now. You know what an embryo is; it is something that has life, but undeveloped and not fully conscious life. Development will take place and consciousness will grow, but it is not there to begin with. That is what we are when we are born again. We have life, but how much consciousness and understanding of the meaning of that life is there? Very little! How many of the Lord's people, of all the millions on this earth, are conscious of what they are saved unto, of what is the great object which God has in view in saving them? They have life because they are born again, but the life is only embryonic life in the sense that the consciousness of the meaning of it is very limited. But as that life develops, so there grows the consciousness of the object for which we have been born again. There may be a good deal of enthusiasm, activity and energy about young Christians, but if they stay there, having only energy and not understanding, they are not growing. Any little babe will wear you out in the course of a few hours: try and do what a child does and see how long you can keep it up. There is plenty of life and energy, but not much intelligence. The real mark of growth is not energy alone, it is intelligence. The true course of the development of spiritual life is in seeing and knowing more and more what we are called unto, what we are saved for, what is the Divine meaning in that which has taken place in us. There are comparatively few who are growing up like that. Well, in the end the full-grown man, the fulness of the stature of Christ, sonship fully attained, is going to be. It is secure in Christ; it was secured in Christ away back there.

But between what God has eternally secured and projected in His Son and that ultimate realisation, there is what we are by nature. We are not that which is God's thought, and, what is more, it is not in us to be that, whatever the humanists may say—whatever may be the widespread false doctrine of the universal Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, and the power of man to be his own saviour if only he is cultivated and educated, and all the rest. In spite of it all, it is not in us to become what God eternally intended us to be. How blind men are, in the light of recent history, to hold to the belief that, after thousands of years, we are nearer to God! We

are no nearer to God than we were in the beginning. God surely is spoiling all that sort of thing; but men are blind, they still cling to it, they are die-hards in this realm of total depravity. However, where *is* the hope? There, between the two, stands the Cross, and the Cross takes up not only the eternal but the heavenly, the altogether "other." With one hand it possesses what we are, and with the other hand it secures the realisation of the Divine intention and brings them both together in that Man crucified—a Man Who in resurrection becomes the first of the kind of man that is to be. There He is in the Cross. The Cross of the Lord Jesus, Christ crucified, secures another kind of man, and (as we were saying) when we are born again we receive the embryonic life of that new order. If only we will be obedient to the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus we shall be changed into the same image, we shall be transformed, we shall grow up into Him in all things, we shall become progressively like Him, and then, in the great day of His final intervention for us, "we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (I John iii. 2); we shall all be changed, and this corruptible shall put on incorruption, death shall be swallowed up in victory (I Cor. xv. 53-54). The Cross accomplishes that. How great it is!

### Christ the Broken Bread

Now, you see, that is why the Lord Jesus speaks in this symbolic way about Himself. "I am the bread of life . . . I came down from heaven." "He that eateth me . . ." "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves." Clearly that means that the bread must be broken. He speaks those words, not just to individuals, but to the whole company of believers. "He that believeth on me." The bread has to be distributed. You notice that leading up to this was the feeding of the multitude. It was out of the breaking of the bread for the feeding of the multitude that this wonderful revelation of Himself as the bread of life took its rise. Where was the bread broken to be distributed? It was at the Cross. The Cross is the breaking of the loaf, that we might receive Christ. Here is Paul explaining it all, getting right into the mystery of it, in this matchless passage in Ephesians iii. 17-18—"that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." How does Christ dwell in our hearts? He has been broken and given to faith; faith has reached out, and the broken, distributed Christ, Who still remains whole while yet broken, is come to dwell in our hearts. ". . . that Christ may dwell in your

hearts through faith; to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong: to apprehend with all the saints . . ." "we, who are many, are one loaf, one body" (I Cor. x. 17), made so by Christ dwelling in all our hearts through faith. ". . . may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God." That is simply gathering up in one comprehensive statement what we have been saying.

### The Greatness of the Love of God

We close by a fresh emphasis upon the four-fold dimensions of the love of Christ. Love, in Ephesians, goes hand in hand with the great word "grace." Grace and love in Ephesians are twins; or shall I put it this way—grace is love in action. When you come to grace in Ephesians, it is not just the grace of God towards us to save us from hell, and to give us some assurance of heaven; it is the grace of God to save us unto that high and full and perfect thought of His. It is all this that is in view—this vast, eternal thing, all brought into relation to the Church. That is the grace of God here. Then grace is shown to be because of the love of God. "Christ . . . loved the church and gave himself up for it" (Eph. v. 25)—the broken bread. That love springs out of the Cross. The Cross is first brought into view here. "In whom we have redemption" (Eph. i. 7). "You did he make alive, when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins, wherein ye once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience, among whom we also all once lived in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest: *but God*, being rich in mercy, for his great *love* wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ" (Eph. ii. 1-5). There is the love of God, the great love of God, as shown in the Cross, raising us from that awful death through the Cross.

And then that love is seen in its four dimensions—breadth, length, height and depth. What is that? It is the Cross reaching out in its expansiveness. The breadth of the Cross—oh, how broad the Cross is! How broad the love of God is! You can afford to be a whole-hearted "Broad Churchman" in the love of God! Oh, it is much bigger, much broader, than our conceptions of the love of God. Oh,



for more of this love that will broaden us! We are so small, so contemptible, so petty. Do not let us be afraid of thinking of the love of God in terms too broad. The Lord will surprise some of us with what His love has done, and whom His love has saved. Oh, the breadth of His love! It brings us back to the exhortation of Paul to the Corinthians—"be ye also enlarged."

That is the breadth, the outward reach; and now the length of His love—the backward and forward reach, going back beyond time, beyond the Fall, beyond all that has happened. The love of the Cross reaches beyond that and outstrips it. Thank God, it outstrips all that has come in with this creation through Satan and through Adam; and it goes on when time shall be no more. The Cross, the love of God, extends backward and forward over the eternities.

"... what is the breadth and length and height" Oh, the height of the love of God, of the Cross of our Lord Jesus! To what heights it can bring us! "... and made us to sit with him in the heavenly places" (Eph. ii. 6). The heights of the power of the Cross! The reach of the Cross to lift us! We have no conception of what we are going to be. John says, "Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him" (I John iii. 2). Look at Him on the Mount of Transfiguration. Look at Him as in the brightness above that of the noon day sun over the road to Damascus. Look at Him as John saw Him, recorded at the beginning of the book of the Revelation. "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead" (Rev. i. 17). We shall be like Him. We cannot describe it, but that is the height of the Cross, the height of the love. Oh, what an uplift there is in the Cross! What an uplift in the love of God! This is practical, this is not just doctrine. When the love of God really does get hold of a life, it lifts; there is lift in the love of God. Oh, if only God Almighty were to come alongside you now in a personal form, and you knew Him to be God Almighty, the Eternal, and He said to you, I do love you! you would be

lifted clean off the earth at once. The Cross is the great revelation that God loves us. "God so loved... that he gave his only begotten Son" (John iii. 16). Oh, for that love to be in us, that the effect of our being here would be to lift others! I am afraid so often it is the other way—we cast down, we oppress, our effect is not lifting. Oh, God save us into more of His love that lifts!

And the depth of the love of God, the depth of the Cross. We sing:—

Oh, teach me what it meaneth:  
Thy love beyond compare,  
The love that reacheth deeper  
Than depths of self-despair!

That is one depth some of us know—the depth of self-despair. He took all the despair of all men, that abyss of hopelessness, of shame, of sin, right down to the bottom; and the Cross reaches down there, the love of God reaches down there to lift up. What is the depth? Well might the Apostle go back upon himself when he comes into touch with that love, and talk nonsense: "... to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge" (Eph. iii. 19). You are outside of human language. Ephesians is the letter of superlatives. Paul cannot cope with language in that letter, because he has got altogether outside of this life, this world, this creation. He has got into touch with eternity, heaven, God, with the magnitudes, and human language falls over itself in trying to describe that. "The exceeding greatness of his power" (Eph. i. 19). "... able to do exceeding abundantly above all..." (Eph. iii. 20). Language cannot describe it. Here is love in its four dimensions, but it passes knowledge. That may sound like mere words. It is; but oh, what I trust for is that through the words there will be a registration in our hearts of the Spirit of God to tell us that "the love of God is broader than the measures of man's mind." It is deeper than the depths of the world's despair and shame and sin. It is higher than the highest thoughts of which we are capable as to what it can do, and it anchors us outside of time, in eternity.

T. A-S.

## "A Still Small Voice"

Reading: I Kings xix. 7-17.

THE still small voice was God Himself speaking to His troubled servant. Elijah

had come all the way to Horeb to meet with God, for he was in great bitterness of soul. Those who disobey the Lord get themselves

into all sorts of distress and trouble. Those who obey and serve Him, however, have their own peculiar problems to face. Elijah's great distress was a direct result of his devotion to the Lord's interests, as he affirmed in his repeated reply to the Lord's challenge, insisting that his anguished enquiry at Horeb was not due to a merely personal complaint but rather to his concern for the glory of God. "I have been very jealous for the Lord."

### The Prophet's Problem

I cannot believe that Elijah suddenly lost his courage because Jezebel threatened his life. He was made of sterner stuff than that, and it was no new experience for him to be in danger. Doubtless he was feeling a depressing reaction after his tremendous experience on Mount Carmel and his amazing feat of strength in running ahead of Ahab's chariot. We all know how acute such attacks of depression can be, and how ready Satan is to pounce in upon them in an attempt to destroy faith. But the agony of Elijah's heart was not over his own peril, but because of the lack of real change in the state of God's people. His despairing cry when he asked that he might die was due to the apparent failure of his ministry. "I am not better than my fathers." The earlier prophets had laboured and suffered to turn the hearts of the people back to God and had failed. Elijah hoped—and he had good reason to do so—that where they had failed he at last would succeed. He had prayed and waited, had finally taken his bold stand at Carmel where the fire of God fell and the people so enthusiastically acclaimed Jehovah as the true God. The prophets of Baal were slain amid scenes of great religious excitement. Finally, in answer to prevailing prayer, the sorely needed rain had come in abundance. The prophet felt confident that his prayers had been answered in a genuine quickening of the people of God. It must therefore have been a tremendous shock and a crushing disappointment to him when he learned that after all Jezebel was still in power. The "revival" had been nothing more than a passing wave of emotion; evil still occupied the throne and once more forced Jehovah's servant to become a fugitive.

### The Answer of God

I feel that it was in this atmosphere of disillusionment as to Israel's true state, with complete despair for the Lord's interests, that Elijah sat under the juniper tree overwhelmed by a sense of tragic failure. Now he had come by Divine enabling to get to grips with God about it all. He had taken a tremendous

journey to Horeb. Why Horeb? Surely because that represented the place of the people's beginning; there God had called Moses, and thither Moses had brought the redeemed Israelites to meet with their God. It was the place of the manifestation of God's purpose for His blood-bought children, the mountain of revelation of Divine counsels. Elijah had come there to enquire of the Lord, not about his personal problems but concerning the seeming breakdown of the redemptive purpose for Israel. He came to meet God, and he did meet God, though in a most unexpected way. The terrific tempest, the earthquake and the fire—fit symbols of Divine power to a man like Elijah—had no message from the Lord for him. Then came "a still small voice." It was a surprise. It was an entirely new and unexpected aspect of Jehovah's presence. It might have seemed altogether inadequate in the light of the momentous issue. But it was God! Elijah knew that this was not thrills or sensations; this was GOD. And it was God speaking to him. How often some of us miss the voice of the Lord because it comes in unexpected ways. We may be frantically seeking to find the Lord in realms which we imagine to be expressions of Divine power; whereas, had we ears to hear, He is speaking to us also in "a sound of gentle stillness."

### A Deepened Faith

The first message to Elijah was concerning faith. Now if anyone could claim to be a man of faith it was Elijah, for he had wrought the impossible by faith. Yet it cannot be denied that under the juniper tree he became a man without faith. How could this be?

In the first place the situation required a deeper faith than the prophet had yet known. That may surprise us, since Elijah's faith had been so mighty. By faith he had closed the heavens and held off the rain for three and a half years. Now faith that brings rain is very blessed. We have all heard of droughts in foreign lands, of the challenge to heathenism by the messengers of the Gospel who have publicly prayed for rain and affirmed that the true God would answer their prayer in the Name of Jesus. We have rejoiced at such faith, and could have wished ourselves to be the privileged ones to exercise it, so bringing rain to needy places. This, however, was different. It was not a blessing to those in darkness, but a chastening for the wayward people of God. Elijah's faith took the harder course as he prayed that it might not rain. This exercise of faith brought difficulties to himself while it brought trouble to Israel. There was no self-gratification for Elijah in

it; his prayer was the pure outcome of his great jealousy for the Lord and his deep desire that the sinful nation might be brought back to God.

Then at Carmel Elijah's faith had been magnificent. Waiting until the heat of the day had passed, he set up his altar to Jehovah, and then when all was ready called for water to be poured on the sacrifices and on the wood. How often we imagine that faith means trying to help the Lord by our own efforts! We feel that we must not leave it all to Him; we must be actively assisting Him by making it easier for Him to work.

Elijah did not make it easier: he made it harder. Not only were all natural aids to ignition lacking, but he deliberately called for four barrels of water to saturate the offering. Then four more, followed by another four. What folly this seemed, and yet what faith it expressed! We often hinder the Lord by our very attempts to help him. Our natural efforts to co-operate with the Lord—like Abram's—are really expressive of unbelief, although we think that they are of faith. True faith is bold in leaving everything to God, even contributing to conditions which call for something altogether from Heaven. Elijah's twelve barrels of water were to ensure that God alone would be responsible for the fire. We must not foolishly make things more difficult for the Lord, but we may well learn from Elijah how bold true faith can be in staking everything upon Divine intervention. The fire fell, and so faith was rewarded.

It may seem impertinent after such exploits to suggest that Elijah needed to learn more about faith. And yet he did. He needed to learn faith in a deeper way. The message of the still small voice was one of faith so deep and true that even when nothing happened, and although everything seemed to have gone wrong with the Lord's purposes, with nothing visible to go upon, yet Elijah must not give up but must go on trusting the Lord. It was a call for sheer faith in the unfailing sovereignty of God, which is a heart matter. Now all faith is of the heart—it is never merely intellectual—but there are varying depths of heart experience. The supreme experience, Elijah, is not in the wind, the earthquake and the fire, but in something deeper—a quiet, unshaken rest in the utter faithfulness of Jehovah. We, too, have to go into much deeper depths with the Lord in our exercise of faith.

Then faith can never be a static matter, rooted in the past, but must always be an up-to-date experience. Supposing all the Divine purposes had been realised in the one mighty

moment of Carmel's triumph. Elijah would have become a historical figure. His claim to attention would have been that on a certain occasion the fire fell in response to his faith. Faith, then, for him would have become a matter of the past instead of being a present exercise. Alas! that this is often the case with the Lord's servants! They have seen the fire fall in answer to their prayers, so nothing else seems to matter, and spiritual stagnation follows. There is a present call for living faith. The still small voice is a new experience, summoning on to yet more faith in hitherto untried ways.

And finally true faith always runs contrary to our natural tendencies. Elijah was a rugged, tempestuous man, who somehow seemed to be at home amid storms and earthquakes. Those great tumultuous scenes appealed to something in him; he could readily appreciate that they were of God, and find his faith strong to glory in them. But the deeper faith goes the more inevitably it works against our nature; it calls us to strange and painful experiences of loyalty to the Lord. Elijah was not the kind of man who would readily believe that God's method was that of the still small voice, so it involved a new crucifixion of his own ideas and preferences to accept this solemn call to a deeper faith in the Lord.

#### The Inwardness of Spirituality

The second message which came to Elijah in the still small voice was concerning spirituality. It seems strange after all his experiences of the power of God that he should find that the Lord was not in the great natural phenomena which he witnessed at Horeb. Elijah had seen the power of God in most sensational forms. It was not imagination; it was not mere emotion; it really was the mighty working of God. Elijah knew that. The people also knew it, though the effect upon them does not seem to have been lasting. It was indeed the Lord, but it was the Lord "passing by." We need to learn the lesson that spiritual power is not necessarily spirituality. Sensations are not the last word as to the Spirit's working. Elijah had witnessed mighty wonders, and could not understand why they had not produced the spiritual results for which he had so longed and prayed. God had wrought the wonders and yet, like the wind, the earthquake and the fire, God was not "in" them. How mistaken we are when we imagine that the more sensational an act is the higher is its spiritual value! It may truly be an act of God and yet not represent the real end of God. So,



it seems, were the great expressions of power which Elijah witnessed. The Lord performed them and yet the Lord was not "in" them. They could not produce the essential spiritual purpose of God. They were external, working upon men, whereas the highest form of Divine power is spiritual, working within. Elijah had witnessed the goings of God in preparation; now he must realize that the vital purpose can only be secured by inward spirituality—the "still small voice." Elijah was forced to adjust his ideas if he really wanted to be "in" that which the Lord was "in"; that is to say, if he truly meant that nothing less than a deep and lasting spiritual work would satisfy him.

We are often disappointed and dejected because we expect God to achieve His purposes by means of startling cataclysms, whereas His eternal purpose must proceed from an inward experience of the Holy Spirit. When we give ourselves to the Lord for all His will we have visions of how mightily He will respond in a manifest way. The lasting work, however, will not be the striking signs for which the flesh longs, but the deep energies of spiritual life within. Many of God's servants refuse to be adjusted. They insist upon the Lord's keeping them in the realm of the tempest and earthquake. Such powers are everything to them. Happily Elijah was able to recognise that they did not constitute the last word in Divine purpose. They were superficial; the Lord was not "in" them. He learnt at Horeb the great lesson of spirituality—the eternal effectiveness of the still small voice.

This whole matter is summed up for us in the word "anointing." The key to fruitfulness for Elijah was the anointing of Elisha. Everything was made possible by this simple act. Elijah had done many mighty things in the Name of Jehovah, but the greatest of them all was this communication of spiritual power and authority to his successor. It was the key to the capturing of the situation for God, and the effective overthrow of the reign of evil which had for so long defied his preaching, and his praying. God is faithful after all. The vision will be realized. But the way through is by the ministration of the anointing to his successor. Elijah must be prepared to seem a failure, and to pass off the scene; his work, however, will continue and be carried to a successful issue by the man who received all that he had from Elijah's ministry. The deep and lasting meaning of Pentecost is that the purposes of God are committed to those who live in the power of the anointing.

### Life the Unique Feature of God's Working

Lastly we notice that the essential differences between the first three manifestations of power and the still small voice was one of life. The "sound of gentle stillness" was not just an inanimate sound, but a living voice. Although insignificant in volume when compared with the noise of rending mountains and crashing rocks it was greatly superior to all the rest because it was expressive of spiritual vitality. It was not only a sound, it was a voice. Life is not sensational in its development; indeed it is remarkably silent and unobtrusive, but it is the unique feature of the work of God. Mount Carmel's "revival" was after all only a great wave of emotion which swayed the nation for a short while, whereas Elijah looked for a lasting work, which could only be realized by an inward experience of life. That vital process was at work, for the living Lord was "in" the still small voice.

Consider how wonderfully this was demonstrated even during the lifetime of the prophet. When he complained at Horeb it was because he was the only man who dared to confess the Name of Jehovah publicly, and he was a fugitive. Jezebel remained in power and no startling change took place in an outward way; yet by the time that Elijah went up to glory there were communities of faithful men, "sons of the prophets," found in quite a number of places. In quiet and simple ways "life" was working among the people of God, and it was finding expression among these groups of godly men who had a knowledge of the Lord and of His Word, though they lacked any official status. The still small voice was at work all over the land.

But undoubtedly the most direct fulfilment of this principle was found in Elisha. In his very person he embodied the principle of life, and he ministered it in power. When Elijah went to Glory he left only Elisha to carry on his ministry. How woefully inadequate that one simple soul must have seemed! So much so that the sons of the prophets themselves pitied him and patronisingly offered him a place in their ranks. He was a nobody. As the still small voice must have seemed an anticlimax after the tremendous, awe-inspiring noise of the wind and fire, so Elisha appeared mean and contemptible in comparison with his great master. Yet he was alive, and was to know a mighty endowment of the Spirit of the Living God, and actually he became one of the most notable expressions of Divine power which Israel had ever known. He it was who set in motion the events which led to Jezebel's

downfall, and it was he who carried Elijah's ministry right through to its true consummation. How much more important, then, to be communicators of life than to be workers of lesser, though more spectacular, miracles; for life is the way through to all God's purposes.

### The Issue in Glory

With this threefold assurance Elijah could go on. Until Horeb he was ready to give up, but there he was commanded: "Go, return on thy way . . . ." The more vital our

ministry the more will Satan seek to strike us down with despair as to its value. We must get to Horeb, and hear the voice of the Lord. Elijah felt that his path was leading to shameful failure, whereas it was leading him right on to Glory. From the juniper tree to translation to Glory! What an amazing road he was treading! He almost abandoned it, but was saved by Horeb's revelation as to the secret of faith and of spiritual life.

H.F.

## The New Day of the Spirit

### II

#### The Man in the Glory

*Reading: Ezek. i. 26; ix. 2; xl. 3; xliii. 6-7; Acts ii. 33; vii. 55-56; II Cor. xii. 2.*

IN our previous meditation we began to see something of what the book which goes by the title of "The Acts" brought in—that is, a new day, a new age, with an entirely new character: a day which, because of the advent of the Holy Spirit and His absolute sovereignty in the realm of Divine things, is an age-day which is fundamentally and essentially spiritual in its nature and character. We began to see something of the content of that; and our occupation is with the deeper and fuller meaning of Pentecost.

#### The Spirit in the Books of Ezekiel and The Acts

Turning back to the prophecies of Ezekiel, no one who has read them needs to be told what a very large place the Spirit of the Lord has in them. A glance at your concordance will at once show you how large that place is. You see that the Spirit is constantly mentioned all the way through—the activities of the Spirit in sovereignty in all kinds of connections with Divine thoughts; and by that alone there surely is a basic link with the book of The Acts, for the same connection is registered by a glance at that book with the one word in mind, the Spirit; it is all the Spirit in the manifold activities of the exalted Lord, His continuation of doing and speaking. So we can say that there is a very close relationship between these two portions of the Scripture as part and counterpart; and it is in connection with some of the features of that that we are to be occupied now.

In our previous meditation we dwelt upon one point amongst others—seeing how the book of The Acts takes up comprehensively the Old Testament and gives it a new spiritual reproduction, interpretation, application, and in some ways reverses the order of the Old Testament. Here we have a grand example of that in the case of what is in the prophecies of Ezekiel. Amongst those things which we saw previously was this—the Spirit of God brooding upon the face of the deep, hovering over the chaos, and then active as the Divine Agent of reclamation, redemption, resurrection, to bring in a new creation. The object of it all in the natural was seen to be man; it reached its climax in the man that was in God's thought. Carried over to the New Testament, we saw that when the Spirit of God came into action in this sovereign way, redemptively, re-creationally, it was all with a Man in view, the Man who is said to be the life-giving Spirit, the last Adam. "First . . . that which is natural; then that which is spiritual." "The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam a life-giving spirit" (I Cor. xv. 45, 46). The Man is in view.

#### The Moral and Spiritual Government of the Man in the Glory

Now let us recall the above passages with which we began. In Ezekiel, each of those which we read brought a man into view. There is no difficulty in interpreting the first of them. "Above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne . . . and upon the likeness of the throne was a likeness as the appearance of a man upon it above." Then we went over into the Acts. "Being . . . by (marg. at) the right hand of God exalted . . ." "I see . . . the Son of man

standing on the right hand of God." A Man is in view. The correspondence between these passages is evident and in both cases the meaning is the same. You go back to the opening chapters of Ezekiel from which the above words are taken and you find all the Divine intentions and thoughts are being projected, the counsels and purposes of God are in view—the wheels and the living ones and the spirit in the wheels: Divine counsels, the purposes of God in motion—and they are all under the government of this One Who is upon the Throne. All these Divine movements in relation to Divine intentions concerning a people for God are all under the government of that One upon the Throne; and they go straightforward, they turn not as they go; they are not deviating, they are not hindered; they go and they go straightforward because there is One Who is in the place of absolute sovereignty, and nothing, however it may seem otherwise, can really divert His purposes. So in this book of The Acts; whatever happens which seems to be a diversion or a subverting or a hindrance or a contradiction, and however much it seems to be out of the straight way, is found in the end to be compelled, by a governing hand, really to reach God's end and fulfil it, and not hinder it. He is going straight forward. It is because of the Man in the glory. Yes, He is God's Son, very God, but that is not the line of our thought at the moment. It is the Man—"I see the Son of man . . ." As the Man He is the full embodiment of the perfection of God's thoughts concerning man that is ultimately to be, man that is eventually to occupy God's realm, and as Son of man He is installed, enthroned, established as the perfect model of how things are to be; and God is taking the straight course in the power of the Spirit to that end—to have things according to the Man in the glory. And that Man in the glory is not just officially, but morally and spiritually, governing everything to that end. If He were acting officially, of course, none of these contrary things would be allowed, no one would be able to raise a hand; but He is acting spiritually and morally in His authority. I mean by that that you and I are not brought to God's end simply by those sovereign acts of the Lord in heaven which save us from all kinds of difficulties. Something has to be done in us, and therefore it must be spiritual and moral government that operates to conform us to the image of God's Son; so that, although there may seem to be hindrances and obstructions and difficulties—and there are—nevertheless, His spiritual government is producing spiritual ends in us which mean

approximation to His own likeness. So it is by the Spirit that He governs, and not just as official, sovereign Lord. It is most important to recognize that it is a spiritual government, for it means that everything is spiritual. Ascendancy and triumph and arrival are going to be spiritual, not just natural—we shall not simply be brought there apart from anything that is accomplished in us. We are moving towards God's end by spiritual government within our lives, not merely by a sovereign hand upon us. I think that is quite clear, but it is necessary to say it as we go on.

Now, the point of this first presentation of the Man, both in Ezekiel and in Acts, is that the governing reality is One Who already embodies God's thoughts in perfection, and all government is in relation to Him. He, as God's perfect realisation, sits in the place of absolute authority and holds everything into the ends which God has purposed. There has to be, by the Holy Spirit, something of that accomplished in us if we are going to reach this Divine end.

#### **"A Man in Christ"**

I have taken up a fragment of autobiography from Paul because it is going to serve us greatly by way of illustration. "I know a man in Christ." Now, we believe that Paul was an elect vessel; in a very special way he was chosen of God for a special purpose; and when we look to see what that special purpose is—that is, what singles him out and distinguishes him even from the other Apostles—we are compelled to come down to one thing, that to Paul was committed a revelation of the one new man in Christ: "the church which is his body": the collective, the corporate, man. Then we see also that not only was that revelation and that ministry or stewardship committed to Paul in a specific way, but that it was passed right through his very history. It was something that was caused to go through him, right through his very being, and his whole life was brought by the Spirit of God on to the basis of that revelation and dealt with accordingly; so that Paul, in a unique way, became a representation for the age on earth of this thought of God—a man, the one new man, a man in Christ. He calls himself that—a man in Christ. That helps us to come back to Ezekiel and take these other three particular references to the Man.

#### **The Man with the Inkhorn**

We have seen the standard, the model, the representation, the inclusive One. We have seen that that is set to govern all the activities of God in a spiritual way. Now, break that



up. The next presentation of a man is that of a man clothed in linen with an inkhorn by his side; and what is he doing? The One in the glory—for so we may speak: although it does not say this actually, this is the conclusion—the One in the glory is taking account of the state of things here, and especially amongst the Lord's people, those who bear His Name; and the state of things is said to be very, very much other than according to that Man. There is very little that indicates the Man in the glory here; that is, there is very little of the Lord's thought in any fulness that can be discerned. But the man with the inkhorn, clothed in linen—and we must not stop with all the details—is taking a note of everybody; he is singling out, he is listening, he is looking at faces, he is watching, he is looking inside of hearts, and whenever he finds a man who sighs and who groans because of the state of things, he puts a mark on him; such a one is a marked man before heaven. The man with the inkhorn is a Man from heaven, a Man here with the Divine thoughts, and where He finds a real heart exercise, a heart sorrow and burden, a sighing and a groaning because God has not got what He ought to have—all things according to Christ—He marks that as something of account.

“I know a man in Christ.” Listen! “I . . . fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church” (Col. i. 24). That is in the spirit of what we are saying—a man with a great burden of concern and travail because God's thoughts are not found expressed amongst God's people, that is, Christ is not being reproduced in the spirit of His heavenly Manhood. This man in Christ on another occasion said, “My little children, of whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you . . .” (Gal. iv. 19). This is a man sighing and groaning because there is such a coming short of that Divine thought in the people of God. Such an attitude results from a work of the Spirit of God, and the implication is this, that Pentecost in its outworking—or the presence of the Holy Spirit here—will mean that those in whom the Spirit operates and has His way will never be able to rest short of God's full thought for themselves or for others. They will be deeply exercised and burdened and will be drawn into the travail of Christ, to fill up that which is lacking of His sufferings for His Body's sake which is the Church. This man in Christ is a marked man, he is marked from heaven as one whose whole heart is taken up with this great concern that what is there should be found here: that what is true of Christ, the

Man in the glory, should be more fully expressed here in this new man, the Church, the Body. That is an operation of the Holy Spirit; and if you tell me that the Holy Spirit is having His way, and yet there is complacency with things that are not according to Christ, I say that is a contradiction; it cannot be. If you are perfectly satisfied with things as they are in yourself or in other believers, and have no real concern that there should be a full conformity to the image of Christ and that the whole Body should be brought to the measure of the stature of a man in Christ, the Spirit of God is not doing His work in you. Pentecost in its deeper meaning will produce that. The very fact that so soon after His advent the Church moved out as by Divine urge to seek the members of the Body and then to bring them into full conformity is proof positive that the Spirit of God is seeking to perfect a Body, a manhood, according to that Man Who has been revealed as in the glory. The man with the inkhorn signifies that—that the Spirit of God produces a heavenly concern and takes note of where that concern is.

#### The Man with the Measuring Reed

The next chapter, chapter xl, brings in the man with the measuring reed, and his appearance is as that of brass. He is in type but the expression of Christ, God's full measure, coming here to show where things come short, and to indicate where this is lacking and that is needed, and what the Lord wants as to His exact measure of Christ. It is what Peter called judgment beginning at the house of God (I Pet. iv. 17), for brass typifies judgment. Paul also was very exercised about measurements. You know what he says about them; measurements as to the House, the Church, the Body; the length and breadth and height and depth; the *measure* of the stature of the fulness of Christ. All that he wrote and said on the numerous matters of the life of the Lord's people we must interpret in the light of this, that it is a matter of the degree in which there is a coming short of Christ. The Lord is very greatly concerned about spiritual measure, although His people are not so concerned; and this man is really Christ, the Man in fulness, coming down to be like a measuring rod beside His Church, and to say, This is where you are not true, and you must adjust; this is where you have excesses, and they must go; this is where you have deficiencies, and they must be made good. It is the Spirit of God at work all the time to see to it that in all details we are according to Christ, the Spirit of God working in relation

to that perfect measure that is in heaven, the measure for this Body, for this collective man, in all its parts.

And then how detailed is this man with the measuring reed! He takes the prophet in and out and round about and up and down and through, and is measuring all the time. He measures the gate, the porch, the threshold, the court, every chamber; everything is measured. He says, in effect, that God has His thought for every part; the details matter to Him, and the Spirit has come to check us up on all matters of detail which relate to God's purpose in calling us in Christ. A man in Christ who is governed by the Spirit of Christ will not be lax and careless about anything, even the smallest things. But, while this may sound difficult, a high standard that could bring us into a good deal of burden, bondage and legalism, let us remember that the Spirit of God has come to accomplish this very thing—not only to judge but to do what is needful. That is the other side of Paul's great ministry; not only the pointing out of what comes short or what is in excess, but to say, The Spirit can make it all good—He is here to do that. That is why in Paul's letters to Corinth (particularly the first), where so much had to be indicated as disorderly, as not according to Christ, the Holy Spirit has such a large place. Yes, He is here, not just as the Judge, but as the helper of our infirmities, to correct the wrong, to bring about conformity to Christ.

### The Place of His Glory

Then in Chapter xliii there is the man speaking out from the place of the glory, saying, "Son of man, this is the place of my throne . . . where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever." Paul, the man in Christ, uses words which explain that when he says, "Unto him . . . be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever" (Eph. iii. 21), and, coupled with that, "a habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. ii. 22). You can see the Divine thought. What is the place of glory where God will dwell? It is no place on this earth as geographically located or materially constructed. It is a spiritual sanctuary, a habitation of God through the Spirit. It is something which has been spiritually constructed, constituted and perfected, and His dwelling and His habitation will be there, and it will be the place of His glory unto all ages for ever and ever. What is it? In other words it is the realisation in a people of that conformity to the image of His Son. God, by His Spirit, is working to make us a glorious

Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, for His own habitation. "And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, . . . and I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Rev. xxi. 2-3); ". . . the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God" (Rev. xxi. 10-11). This is none other than the corporate man in Christ perfected and glorified. That is a vision of Christ and what Christ means in the thought and intention of God. It is a revelation of that for which the Holy Spirit has come, and an explanation of what the Holy Spirit is doing to get rid of all in us which cannot be glorified. Having brought life and incorruption to light by the Gospel, He is working unto that day when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, this mortal shall put on immortality, and death shall be swallowed up in victory, when the Church is a glorious Church where God Himself is found without restraint and in which He is worshipped in His universe. The Man in the glory, being at God's right hand exalted, established, settled, is the assured realisation of God's end. He cannot be there without His members. He cannot go on there alone. All the meaning of the presence there of Christ, the Son of man, would be stripped from Him if His Church never came there, made like unto Him; there would be no meaning in it at all. He is, after all, but the First-born among many brethren; He is bringing many sons to glory. The Spirit of sonship has come, not to try and do something, not with a hope that it may be; He has come in all the sovereignty of that One there, and it is going to be. Settle your faith in this. However many questions you may have as to yourself, however often you may despair in yourself and be on the point of giving everything up—and who that knows his own heart does not know the frequent temptation to do this?—yet there is no need for despair. There is another view, there is something else going on. The Spirit has come, He is within. He sees One at the right hand of God, and in spite of our despair about ourselves, in spite of the discouragement and impossibility that we find in ourselves, the Spirit of God is holding us to the Man in the glory, and going on with His work; and it is not until we abandon faith in the omnipotence of the Spirit of God that hope departs and despair settles down. While we will believe that the Spirit of Christ has come in all that omnipotence of the exalted

Son of man, and is in us to do the work, hope springs eternal, there need be no despair. He is working in sovereignty.

I do believe that this book of The Acts, as it opens, says so loudly and clearly this one thing—that out from heaven the Spirit of Almighty God has come in sovereignty to see things through. Let Herod do what he likes, let the kings and the nations have their confederacies, let all conditions work adversely, let Satan and all his forces operate, the Church goes on and these very things are drawn right into the train of Christ's triumph and made to serve the Divine ends. The things which befall work out for the furtherance of the Gospel, and the very things which look like disasters and calamities prove, at

long last, to be complementary things under the sovereignty of the risen Lord. The Spirit of God is in charge. Oh, that our faith may settle there and deliver us from our despair! There is a Man in the glory; the Spirit of God has come and has entered into us with just one object—to make all things abound toward the reproducing of that Man in us, in measure individually, and in the collective measure of the individuals in one glorified Body, Christ corporate. What possibilities! What a prospect! May the Lord give us a new vision of His beloved Son and a new heart confidence and assurance that He Who hath begun a good work in us will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ.

T. A-S.

## For Boys and Girls

### Gospel Messages from the Antarctic (No. 5)

*Jesus said: "I am the living bread . . ."*  
(John vi. 51).

*"Christ in you, the hope . . ."* (Col. i. 27).

**F**OOD was the great problem in the Antarctic. While the explorers moved on or near the sea there was always the chance of killing a seal or a penguin for food, but inland there was no living thing whatever to be found—not even a blade of grass. They were compelled to take with them every ounce of food needed. This involved some very careful planning. It would have been easy if they had had merely to calculate how much would be needed by so many men travelling for a certain number of days, if each man were to have so much food each day; but it was much more complicated than that.

Their great object was to reach the South Pole, a total distance from their base of about 1,700 miles. They could not possibly take with them all the food needed for such an immense distance, and a most careful plan was made for meeting the need. First of all a party of men went out a considerable distance to make depôts, or dumps, of food. This in itself was a long and difficult and dangerous journey. Then later a party of fifteen men, with dogs and ponies, set out, all pulling food on their sledges. At certain stages some food—very carefully calculated—was dumped to provide for the return journey. Later, after careful calculation of quantities, the ponies were killed one by one because they were no longer needed and their flesh was required for

feeding the dogs. Then later the dogs were killed one by one because the dog food was coming to an end. At a certain point—again very carefully planned, and having regard to the amount of food available—some of the men turned back for home. Further on others turned back, leaving only five men to travel the last 150 miles to the Pole.

What a business it must have been calculating in advance how much of each kind of food must be taken! If you were set to do a sum like that at school I think you would give it up as hopeless. And remember—any mistake made might mean the death of the men concerned. Some of our explorers did almost die of starvation on the way back, and they must often have been in great anxiety wondering if their stocks would last out. At times they were held up for days by blizzards, and had to eat the precious stores that had been set aside for the journey without any hope of replacing them. The great tragedy of the whole expedition was this—that the five men who went on did reach the Pole, but on the way back one died from exhaustion, and later the other four died of starvation at a point where they were actually only eleven miles from a dump where they could have had all that they needed.

Oh, what a heartbreak this matter of food must have been to them! Never-ending calculations of what was needed, and never-ending anxiety whether there would be enough to meet the need! Our explorers were brave men and did not worry needlessly; but how often they must have asked themselves questions—Shall



we have enough? Ought we to reduce our rations? Suppose we are delayed by a blizzard? Dare we go on further or should we turn back in case . . .? What a world of uncertainty to live in! If only they could have started out with supplies that did not grow less and less! If only they could have eaten food which satisfied all their need and yet was there for use at the next meal! That would have solved their transport difficulties. But it could not be. They ate food that perished—not “living bread.”

Now you and I have agreed to go exploring in the land called “In Christ,” and there we too have need of food—but spiritual, not material. Are we going to be worried and made anxious all the time by questions—How . . .? What . . .? Where . . .? Supposing . . .? Is it safe to go on? Shall we be able to get through? Oh, what a miserable world to live in! Many people, even Christians, do live in it and they are not helpful or happy. They are not restful; they have no confidence. Life for them is a great strain. Compare them with what the Lord Jesus said: “Be not anxious . . . what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor . . . what ye shall put on” (Matt. vi. 25). How restful He Himself was! He was never fretted or anxious. He knew the secret of *always having enough for every need*. He described it in this strange way: “the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father.” He meant this: “My Father, Who is the Living One, is the source of my life: He satisfies every need of mine: I do not have to depend on things outside of myself—the Father is *in* me and I feed on Him, I live by Him.” How restful to know that all you need is *inside* you—that you have it with you wherever you go, and that no matter how much you draw upon it there is always enough for all future needs, however great and unexpected they may be! You do not have to ask, How shall I get through? What shall I do if . . .? All that you need is inside! Is such a life of rest possible for us? Yes, indeed it is, or the Lord Jesus would not have said, “Be not anxious . . .” He Himself is the way to it; and the secret lies in *having Him inside*; and this is possible only to people who have been born again. When we are born again, the Lord Jesus, by His Spirit, comes to dwell within us, and He is there all the time for us to feed on, and to be the answer to every need of ours. So He said: “As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father; so he that eateth

me, he also shall live because of me” (John vi. 57). “I am the bread which came down out of heaven” (vi. 51). “I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst” (vi. 35). The bread of life—*living* bread! No need for supplies of that to run short; however much we use there is plenty more! Our explorers did not need to carry water with them—there was plenty of snow everywhere which they could melt and drink; but the spiritual water which you and I need in our exploring does not even have to be collected from outside. Here it is: “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life” (John iv. 14). A well inside us that can never run dry! If we know the secret of feeding on Christ and drinking of the water that He gives, all our anxious questions disappear and we can say with Paul, “I can do all things . . . I have all things . . .” (Phil. iv. 13, 18). We need not hesitate to step out, to move into the unknown, to attempt tasks too hard for us, if the Lord bids us to go forward. We need not wonder whether our supplies will come to an end and we shall be stranded. We may dare *anything* at His bidding. We may trust Him in *any* circumstances. He is always sufficient. Our *own* resources will certainly come to an end very quickly, but the moment we turn to the Lord and in faith rely upon Him as within us, we shall find we have an inexhaustible supply—we live because of Him. You will understand of course that we cannot count on His help in doing things that He does not want us to do, but apart from this every need will be met, and even when the next step forward looks difficult we need not worry—Christ in us will be the answer. But can we trust Him like that? Will *you* depend on Him like that, for every need of every day? It will not happen apart from your faith. “All things are possible to *him that believeth*” (Mark ix. 23). That is what is meant by “eating” Christ and living because of Him.

Surely the boy or girl who knows most really the secret of “Christ in you” (Col. i. 27) will be the one who will reach the “South Pole” first.

I'm feeding on the living bread,  
I'm drinking at the fountain head,  
And whoso drinketh, Jesus said,  
Shall never, never thirst again.

G. P.

## “ God Hath Spoken ”

### IV.

#### How life is maintained. The principle of the New Covenant

**I**N our last chapter we laid special emphasis upon the necessity for everything to be preserved in life, as against even Christianity becoming resolved into another system of “dead works.” For, what the writer (of the Epistle to the Hebrews) said was necessary as to Judaism in his time, has now become a necessity in relation to much of Christendom, namely “repentance from dead works” (vi. 1).

In this chapter we shall gather our thoughts around a principle which is implicit in the whole purpose and argument of the letter. It is that of how life is preserved and maintained. This is one of the most difficult matters to convey unless there is a real measure of spiritual understanding, and it might well suffer in the same way as did the “many things” regarding Melchizedek in Chapter v. 11. However, the spiritual situation is such to-day as to justify every attempt at solving it.

The first phase of the problem is this; seeing that there is a sum of Christian doctrine and practice embodied in the New Testament, and that certain clearly defined beliefs and practices represent the substance or foundation of Christianity: that these are not to be added to or taken from: is it possible that Christianity should not become a set system, tradition, or form? There are some phrases in the New Testament which would seem to imply that it is such. It would seem impossible to avoid this when once the first newness, novelty, and wonder have passed, and age succeeds age in Christian teaching, work and practice. But to accept such a conclusion and position is really to violate the most vital and crucial facts in New Testament Christianity, and to agree to a state of things which is a caricature and denial or contradiction of Christ. If Christianity *were* a system of truths and practices then the above-mentioned result would be inevitable. But it is *not*! It is a living Person, known only in the power of the Holy Spirit. Yes, and not known all at once, but to be known by continuous and ever-growing revelation of the Holy Spirit. That brings us to our point.

#### The Old and the New Revelation

In the letter under contemplation, among many comparisons and contrasts between what *was* and what *is*, reference is made to the two Covenants. Before considering the crucial point of difference between them, let us remind ourselves of the nature and meaning of a Biblical Covenant.

Firstly, a Covenant was an expression, revelation, or making known of God's thoughts, mind, desires, and will. In those presentations of God's mind the character and nature of God was made known. When we read the terms we have to say, That is what God is like.

Then, upon that revelation of Himself God offered and moved to bring His people into an active relationship with Himself as to purpose and destiny. He made a Covenant with them on that basis. It was a mutual understanding that—if they accepted the basis—He fulfilled promises.

The Covenant was sealed or ratified by blood. The blood was provided by God and symbolised life. In a way prescribed by God, man—the other party to the Covenant—had to participate by an act of identification with the blood-donor. So it became a case of sharing in one life. It was this that made blood so sacred in Old Testament times. Of course this opens up the whole realm of Blood Covenant, but here we do no more than hint at it. To violate the terms of this Covenant was to rupture the very bond of life. The focal point of all warning and judgment was idolatry, which was spiritual fornication, or—in principle—unlawful mixture of bloods—i.e. life.

Thus we are able to come to the heart of the letter to the Hebrews. These Hebrews would understand it well. Look again at the Blood, the Life, and the Covenant in this letter. Here we are able to appreciate the whole question of sonship, with which we dealt in the last chapter. But here we are brought right up to the all-dominating feature of the Person of Christ.

#### The Living Person Governs All

No, it is not a new system of truth. It is not a new and superior religion. *It is a Living Person of Whom the truths and practices are but spiritual features.*

Let us look at this briefly in three aspects.

Firstly; the letter to the Hebrews (and indeed the whole New Testament) does not say that we have to come to believe and accept certain doctrines such as those mentioned in chapter vi—Repentance, Faith, Baptism, Laying on of hands, Resurrection of the dead, Eternal Judgment—in order to be New Testament Christians. Although the passage *seems* to contradict that statement, we are very insistent upon it, for it is upon this that we are sure the whole question of life and death rests. It is here also that a very great peril lies in the preaching and propagation of New Testament truth. If these matters have a place, as they certainly do, that place is subsequent to something else. Does it sound strange—in the light of certain Scriptures—to say that, *in the first instance, we are not commissioned to preach repentance?* While it may be less surprising to be told that the same is true regarding baptism, etc., yet it is as true of the one as of the other! The Holy Spirit always demands and secures a background of and occasion for precipitating a reaction from man's side, and that ground is not just that men are told that they must do certain things. No, this letter, like all New Testament preaching and teaching, opens with a revelation and presentation of the Person of Christ in living fullness. It was ever and only as people were convicted by the Holy Spirit as to the sovereign supremacy of the Lord Jesus and were actively ready to capitulate utterly to Him that these other things became a living and eager expression of that capitulation. Until people have really seen Christ by Holy Spirit revelation or illumination and conviction, there is no adequate motive for repentance, and the rest. It is not repentance for *sins!* That would make salvation a matter of degree according to the number or nature of the sins. It is all a matter of the Person. "Of sin, because they believe not on me" (John xvi. 9). Hence, New Testament preaching was little more than a proclaiming of Christ—crucified, raised, exalted, glorified—with its implications and challenge. The Holy Spirit's way of overthrowing and uprooting false systems and positions has never been that of exposing the falseness, but that of bringing Christ in His greater fullness into view and convicting concerning Him! It is always positive, never negative. So it is the shadow of a Glorified Man—God's Son—that lies right over all the detail of the letter, and the New Testament as a whole.

Secondly; all the truths and practices are but

### Features of the Living Person

and must be seen in the light of the inclusive revelation of Himself. Take the matters referred to in particular in chapter vi. "Baptism" is not an ordinance, it is Christ expressed in death and resurrection as representing the old creation judged and doomed, and the new creation which is wholly out from God without a trace of judgment ground in it. Baptism then is the way in which a believer declares that he or she has been crucified with Christ, and, although living, yet it is not himself or herself but Christ.

The New Covenant, in the first place, is in the blood of Christ, i.e. His life, and in participation in His nature as "firstborn among many brethren." Glance again at chapter ii of this letter.

The "Laying on of Hands" in the New Testament signified that Christ is now no isolated and separate Individual, but Head of the Church—His Body—and that the Spirit in anointing upon the Head is for all the members in relatedness to Him and to one another; the Spirit being the power, the wisdom, the capacities, the qualifications, the energies, and the endowments for the Body's functioning as a heavenly Body. Hence, with the Laying on of Hands *at the beginning* the Spirit *demonstrated for all time* that Christ and His members are one for the accomplishment of eternal counsels. This is no ordinance, it is Christ corporately expressed.

It is in this way that all doctrine and practice must be seen. Not as things in themselves, but as features of the Living Person, and they must be kept in that relationship.

Thirdly; and here we come to the principle which lies at the heart of all. Nothing that is in the New Testament can be taken and reconstructed into a system just because it is there. There is no system of doctrine and procedure which lies within that vast compass called "Christianity," however divergent or contradictory, however nominal or extreme, however fantastic or doubtful, but bases itself upon Scripture, and supports itself by the New Testament. It is no guarantee that there will be life because a framework, a body, has been put together and built up according to the exact technique of the New Testament. Many efforts have been made to reconstruct the "New Testament Church" in the belief that the nearer to the model the surer and fuller the Divine commitment. But it just doesn't work! The order of the New Covenant is just the reverse of the Old. Then God wrote upon tablets of stone and presented it as a tangible and objective completeness. In the New, the



Spirit of God—*dwelling within*—writes upon the heart and mind. Then God appeared in unapproachable and unendurable glory so that men were devastated by His presence. Now “God . . . hath shined into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (see II Cor. iii-iv-v).

*The face of Jesus Christ.*

*The glory of God* in the face of Jesus Christ.

*The knowledge* of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

*The light* of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

*In our hearts* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Now, the crucial point is this. The principle of the New Covenant is a first-hand individual revelation of Christ as the knowledge of God in terms of glory in the heart of the believer. Every individual believer only comes into true Christianity by a revelation of Christ in his or her heart, so that the knowledge of Christ is all their own, and as real as when God commanded light to shine in darkness. But that is not all. That shining must be progressive. Christ is far too vast to be seen in more than minute degrees, at any one time. The bulk of the New Testament is taken up with getting Christians to see what an immense realm it is into which they have come, and how they must go on; and that is the object of the letter under consideration.

Christianity can only be kept living and fresh and full of impact as Christians are living in an ever-growing apprehension of Christ as the Holy Spirit reveals Him in the heart.

This apprehension may only come as necessity is laid upon us by reason of suffering and trial. Capacity will increase by the stretching of suffering (see chapter xii, and read “child-training” for “chastening”). There is no succession in Christianity other than that of the revelation of Christ to the heart by the Holy Spirit. It is not a system to be perpetuated, but a life to be possessed. The value of the Scriptures is that they contain depths and fulnesses which have never yet been fathomed; and when we speak of “revelation” we do not mean anything extra to them, but of that which is in them, but only known by the inward “writing” and “shining” of the Holy Spirit. The great peril into which Christendom has fallen is that of stultifying the vastness of Christ by putting Him into a framework of credal statements, each one of which seeks to be the beginning and end of

the matter. Moreover, the Church and its work have been reduced to a formula, and no room is left for anything that goes beyond that formula. It is just possible—and indeed it has sometimes happened—that the Lord should throw such a freshness and fulness of light upon some Scriptural statement of truth as to transform and revolutionise it and lead out into an altogether new life and ministry; and this without any contradiction of its essential and true meaning. There is such a thing as holding down the truth in tradition, as well as holding down the truth in unrighteousness (Rom. i. 18).

Let us try to summarise what we have said and meant.

- (1) It is doubtful whether a full and complete system of doctrine and procedure can be reconstructed from the New Testament, so that on all matters we have a precise answer to every question as to what should be done, and how it should be done at any given time. There certainly are basic and fundamental truths, but the Holy Spirit is still needed.
- (2) It is, moreover, doubtful whether the Lord meant that there should be such a complete verbal framework; so that everything could be applied, repeated, and duplicated mechanically.
- (3) The only living way to the realisation of the Divine thought and intention is by an apprehension of spiritual principles. When these principles are grasped, then the object, the means, and the methods of their expression are *livingly* appreciated.

For instance:—

- (a) Sonship. When we recognise that sonship is a *full* Divine thought, and not just an initial one, as in birth, we shall then have the motive for “pressing on to full growth.” It is a principle.
- (b) Corporate union, life, and service. When we see the *corporate* principle as governing spiritual fulness, and that it is not possible for any unit of the Body of Christ to come to fulness apart from relatedness with other members, then we really have apprehended the true nature of the work, way, and end of God, and, amongst other things, we have the most powerful motive for fellowship.
- (c) The Holy Spirit’s revelation in terms of life. “The law of the Spirit of life” is the principle of all that is of God. A thing can be in the Bible, and we can have read it a thousand times, but until the Holy Spirit makes it life to us it will be un-

fruitful. Hence, there is a place and need for an inward revelation of the Word of God, and this is the only true succession. Nothing can be preserved alive through generations save as every one entering its realm does so on the basis of such a personal, inward, living, and growing revela-

tion of the truth, so that the *origin* and *beginning* is constantly repeated in experience.

These are principles. The Epistle to the Hebrews has been called the Book of the Open Heaven, and this is its meaning.

T. A-S.

## The Holy Spirit in the Life of a Child of God

*"But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature. . . . And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he is keeping the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him; for we will not sit down till he come hither. And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look upon. And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him; for this is he. Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren; and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward" (I Sam. xvi. 7, 11-13).*

*"And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall over-shadow thee; wherefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God" (Luke i. 35).*

*"And Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke i. 41).*

*"And . . . Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit" (Luke i. 67).*

*"Simeon . . . was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple" (Luke ii. 25-27).*

*"He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (Luke iii. 16).*

*"The Holy Spirit descended in a bodily form, as a dove, upon him, and a voice came out of heaven, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased" (Luke iii. 22).*

*"And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, and was led in the Spirit in the wilderness. . . . And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee" (Luke iv. 1, 14).*

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach . . . to proclaim . . . to set at liberty . . . to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke iv. 18).*

I FEEL it very much on my heart that the Lord would have me to say a little to you about the Holy Spirit. To some of you what I shall say will probably be very elementary, but it may be helpful to others, and we never get beyond the place where we need to be reminded of things which are, after all, the greatest things in the life of a child of God. It is not my intention to take up the above passages and speak about them in particular. They have been read in order to bring this matter before us with one object—at least to indicate how large a place the Holy Spirit has in the bringing in and the carrying through of God's purposes and God's instruments.

### Some False Ideas Associated with the Spirit

Let me say at the outset one or two things about the negative side of the Holy Spirit and His presence, that is, what the Holy Spirit does *not* imply—for it is necessary for us to adjust our thoughts in this matter so that we have not wrong ideas which will lead to disappointed expectation. Many people seem to have the idea, more or less vaguely or certainly, that should anyone really be filled with the Holy Spirit and live in the mighty power of the Holy Spirit, certain things are sure to result.

One is that of course such an one will never come up against any difficulties which to him are completely insurmountable. He will, by the power and wisdom of the Holy Spirit dwelling within in fulness, surmount his difficulties and solve his problems very easily. Or again, such a life ought to be very largely free from suffering and adversity; being sealed, owned of God, it could hardly be set aside and rejected and driven out, and, amongst men, made a thing of nought; God would see to it that it was not so. Such ideas do exist, and when experiences to the contrary come, a good deal of perplexity and questioning arises. After all, is the Lord with us? Is the mighty power of the Holy Ghost amongst us and in us? If the Lord were mightily with us, surely we should be carried right on and all our mountains would go down and our difficulties

would be swept aside, our sufferings would be as nothing? And so on. Well, from the moment of the Spirit's descent upon the Lord Jesus at the Jordan, there followed the wilderness and the devil. By the direct action of the Holy Spirit it was so. He was led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tried by the devil. So with David; from the day the Spirit of Jehovah came mightily upon him his troubles began. Almost immediately he found himself a target of the devil. From that day he was a marked man and an outcast, and we know the long periods in which he was hunted, "as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains" (I Sam. xxvi, 20). This man, upon whom the Spirit of Jehovah came mightily, was hunted for his very life. Yes, he was completely rejected and set at nought, and even, at one time at least, despaired in his own heart of survival. So much for a man upon whom the Spirit of the Lord rests mightily. Let us adjust ourselves to this matter and not entertain false ideas of what life is going to be if only we are filled with the Spirit and the power of the Spirit of God rests upon us.

### **The Basic Fact in the Life of a Child of God**

That is the negative side very briefly. Come now to the other side and get right back to the beginning of Christian life—for the sake of anyone who may have an insufficient understanding of what happens when you become the Lord's. Here again we need to correct ourselves, for many think that when you become a Christian, you just adopt a certain line of procedure: you are expected not to do many things that you have been in the habit of doing before, and you begin to do other things that you have not been in the habit of doing. You go to meetings, you associate with Christian people, you begin to pray, and to read the Bible, and do all sorts of things which are regarded as proper to a Christian. That all may take place and then life become one continuous struggle to keep it up. You have taken on something and you have to live up to it, and it is a struggle; and there does not seem to be very much in it more than that. Perhaps you enjoy the fellowship of God's people. You sometimes enjoy the meetings—and sometimes you do not! It is a very unsatisfactory experience from your own personal standpoint in an inward way. After a while you get very weary and you wonder whether there is anything in the Christian life at all.

Well, there is a great deal to be said to correct this point of view. We must understand exactly what does happen when we really become children of God. Let us consider the

case of the Lord Jesus, because in everything, from first to last, He is the exemplar, the representation of the whole Christian life. If you had looked upon Him as an ordinary person in this world in the days of His flesh, you would have seen nothing that marked Him out as essentially different from any other man—that is, as a person in the world. You might have noted that He was a fine type of man and have been impressed by certain things about Him, as in the case of any other man; but apart from that you would not have noticed anything different. In outward appearance He may well have been like David, a splendid specimen of a man. I do not know what He was like physically, but David was that. The Lord had said to Samuel, "Look not on his countenance"; and almost immediately afterward the Word says of David "he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look upon." The implication is this, that, while you are not making the outward the criterion, there may be something quite good there; that is, ugliness is not at a premium. But that is not the point—"God looketh on the heart." Don't you look at the outward appearance; and even although the Lord Jesus may have been amongst men exceptionally fine in physique and appearance, His essential difference from other men was not in that fact. The difference lay deeper, hidden, quite out of sight. Even those in the closest association with Him physically, living with Him all day and every day, week after week, month after month, were not able to discern that difference until long afterward. They had suspicions, perhaps—fleeting impressions; they were often bewildered; but the vital factor lay hidden from them. "Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip?" (John xiv. 9). The difference lay deeper. What was the reality, the great difference, in the case of the Lord Jesus? It was a link between His inner being and His Father God. Those two were in perfect oneness, and out of that perfect, hidden, secret, spiritual oneness of His spirit with the Father, everything in His life took its rise. All His guidance came by that, and He did not act on any of the other lines of guidance common to men—advice, counsel, coercion, custom, expectation, even sympathetic appeal. He put back appeals that were made to Him out of the best of motives and desires for His good and well-being—even a mother's appeal. He had an inner union with God, and out of that He took His guidance, the yea and the nay for all His movements and for everything else. He lived on that, and that was the great inner difference between Christ and every other



person. And that is the thing which distinguishes a child of God. No one who has not been born of God has that, but everyone who has been born of God has it—doubtless in a very elementary and infant form to begin with, because it comes by birth.

Here is the Lord Jesus again as example. He could have come and occupied the body of a man fully grown, and done the work which He really took up only when He was thirty years of age; but He started with birth because we all start there in our relationship with God—new birth; and the new birth is just the bringing about, by a miracle of the Spirit of God, of a union with God which was never there before, and it is out of that that everything of the Christian life takes its rise. It is by reason of that that you begin to do things that you never did before and you stop doing things that you did before. There is no question of strain about it, of compulsion, of law. From the beginning it is just the work of that Spirit's law of life, and you act spontaneously, you do not stop to think about it. In the physical realm you never stop to ask yourself if you are going to take another breath, you just do it. That is living, and it is because you are alive that you do other things. You do your thinking because you are living, but you do not have to think in order to live. It is like that in the life of a child of God. You are alive, and then because you are alive, you become conscious that you are no longer drawn to certain things; but you are drawn to certain others.

### **The Basis of Spiritual Education**

Now what is the outworking of this great fact of being thus alive unto God? As we go on, that factor of life-union is the basis of all our education. It is the nature of our life and it is the basis of our education. David, as an Old Testament saint, was not on the ground of a "born again" believer, but his life was lived under the government of the Spirit and therefore can serve our present purpose by way of illustration. Why, after the Spirit of the Lord had come mightily upon him, did David have the history which was immediately subsequent—adversity, expulsion, suffering, perplexity, bewilderment, even despair? It is a common experience of those who have the Spirit. Even the Apostle Paul—who unquestionably had the Spirit—said at one time that he "despaired even of life" (II Cor. i. 8). Why that? For this reason, that this nature of our spiritual life has to be perfected. The way of spiritual joy is through natural sorrow. The way of wisdom is through utter confounding. And that is not done once and

for all; that is repeated again and again, and the process becomes more severe as you go on! You are brought more and more to an end of any possibility of understanding the ways of God naturally, and more and more to the place where a Divine revelation is absolutely necessary to survival and emergence.

We have said, through sorrow to spiritual joy. We are talking about *spiritual* joy. It is different, altogether from mere optimism and suchlike things. Oh, it is so different! You ask the question, how can certain people rejoice over against such and such circumstances? Well, there is the mystery. It is not something that you can explain naturally at all; it is supernatural, it is Divine, it is a miracle. And so it is with everything—joy, wisdom, strength. Spiritual strength is an altogether different thing from natural strength. Natural strength ebbs and comes to an end. Spiritual strength comes in and even vitalises the physical and the mental. But the position is this, when that work is advanced—should the Spirit of God leave you for a moment, you are utterly weak; that is, for all practical purposes you are useless. But now, for the demands laid upon you physically and mentally, you are living upon another energy, though in the natural world you are weak and a fool. You might be otherwise; if you had not been brought on to this level, you might be amongst men other than a fool, but you have come under the hand of the Spirit of God, and He is making all things to be out from God and nothing out from yourself, physically or mentally or in any way. It is "by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zech. iv. 6), and the education is going on in order to develop our spiritual strength to be the energy of mind and body, the wisdom and the understanding of our lives. It is developing another Entity in us, or, to put it more correctly, it is the growth of Christ in us over against ourselves.

### **Dependence on the Lord and Spiritual Responsibility**

Now this further word. The point you and I have to watch carefully is this, that we do not get into the habit of expecting the Lord to do everything objectively to us and for us. If we do that, the inevitable result will be the stultifying of our spiritual life. You do everything for little children: you hold them up on their feet to start with; if they begin to fall, you at once save them; and you explain everything, you tell everything, and do everything objectively to them and for them. What would you think if you had to do that to a grown person? It would be altogether

abnormal and wrong. And it is no less wrong in the spiritual realm. But this is where many become confused; for they realize that they are utterly dependent upon the Lord—and of course that dependence is necessary, essential and right—and then they mistakenly collapse on the Lord because they are so utterly dependent and wait for Him to do everything. They expect Him to carry them, to support them, and to provide them with a life of continuous miracles. That is all wrong, and it is just there that we have to harmonize these two things—dependence upon the Lord, and spiritual responsibility; by no means an easy task.

That brings us to a more advanced point. We have got away from the beginning now. We are told we have to be utterly dependent on the Lord; on the other hand, we have to be responsible people. How do we reconcile these two things? How is it going to work out? In actual experience we often find that the Lord simply does not do the thing for which we had been waiting. He wants us to come into intelligence, where we recognise whether He says yes or no about the matter. When He says, Yes, we move forward and act, trusting Him of course for the necessary resource. We do not wait for Him to do it. If we have any witness of life and peace in our heart that that is the Lord's mind after sufficient testing of it by the Word and by prayer, then the responsibility for acting is ours. If, on the other hand, we have any reason whatever to doubt that that is the Lord's way, we must take the opposite course; however much we may want to do it, we must say, No; we must refuse to be moved in that direction by any kind of coercion or personal preference or desire. Let everybody say that is the direction in which we ought to move—that of itself is not a sufficient ground for moving. But here we must add a word of caution. What we are saying is based upon this—that the one concerned really has a life with the Lord, really does know the Lord, and that a sufficient breaking has taken place in the realm of natural will and natural likes and dislikes. The Lord Who lived on this basis and moved according to this law had been to Jordan and in type had there renounced the entire ground of self. There are many people who take an independent attitude on the ground that they have received

their guidance from the Lord and therefore they are not going to take any notice of what others may say. But they are unbroken people; that is stubbornness, self-will, natural strength. We have to go through discipline, through testing, and through a measure of breaking, to be in the place where our interests are not governing, where what we would like is not dictating and where our natural thoughts and judgments are not the criterion. But given a true walk with the Lord inwardly, then there is a place of responsibility which we must recognise and accept and where we move or do not move according to what we judge to be the Lord's way after testing the situation.

It is then that the Lord comes alongside. We have been waiting for the Lord to come and act apart from us, and the Lord has been waiting for us to come to a place of spiritual intelligence where we move in that intelligence. As we move He begins to move alongside of us, and we find that things do happen, they do open up. It is wonderful how the Lord comes in and we find that is just what we have been praying for all along—for the Lord to do it; but the Lord has been waiting for something also. The Word speaks about the "set time." David said, "Thou wilt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for it is time to have pity upon her, yea, the set time is come" (Psa. cii. 13). Yes, the Lord may have His set times, but in His infinite wisdom and perfect foreknowledge He makes His set time synchronize with a set condition. We cannot explain that, but there it is. The truth is that when the Lord's time comes and the thing happens, it is not just by an act of God unrelated to other conditions; you will find that that synchronizes with the end of a preparation, the arrival at a state on the part of those concerned, and the set time is in effect the time when they have reached a certain spiritual position. It may be a position of complete disinterestedness, where they are out of the picture—the last vestige of self-interest has gone and the set time has come. Or it may be any one of a number of other things. Whatever it may be, remember that the Divine activities are intimately linked up with a work in us, and that although it will be God's working alone that accomplishes anything, yet that working is delayed until we are ready to take our place of responsibility and to act in faith.

T. A-S.

### The Next SPECIAL GATHERINGS at Honor Oak

will be held, if the Lord will,

on SAT., Sept. 20, 3.30 & 6.30; LORD'S DAY, Sept. 21, 11.0, 3.30 & 6.30,

### SPECIAL NOTICE

## Alone ? — Not Alone !

"I, even I only, am left a prophet of the Lord" (I Kings xviii. 22).

"I, even I only, am left" (I Kings xix. 10, 14).

"Yet will I leave me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal" (I Kings xix. 18).

"Then he mustered . . . seven thousand" (I Kings xx. 15).

"Elijah . . . a man of like passions (nature) with us" (James v. 17).

IT is a gracious thing that, in recording the lives of His most used and representative servants, the Lord has never hidden their weaknesses. Most biographers seem to feel that it would harm their subjects, weaken the testimony, or do injury to the work to which they were called, if they dwelt upon their human nature on its weakest side and pointed out when and where they broke down. There is also a mistaken kindness in this omission; the idea that, all of us being so faulty, we should never refer to the weaknesses of others. If the life was truly glorifying to God as a whole, and the work was really a work of God, it only enhances the grace of God to show how He was with, and blessed, such *very* human and imperfect vessels, and no one who really loves the Lord will take that fact as a cover and condonation of repeated failures. At the same time it is true that God is the only One Who has the right to speak of human weaknesses, and everyone who does so under His direction must do it with deep humility and fear: the reason for this is recognised in such representative cases as Moses, Elijah, David, Peter, etc. Even in the case of Christ Himself, although He did *not* succumb, yet this factor held good, and in His case the fact is definitely shown. That factor is this:

### Satan Knows Our Weakest Moment, and Uses It

It was when the Master had fasted for forty days and nights and hungered that Satan came with his testings. Whatever other factors were present in the cases of Elijah and others, there is no doubt that the physical and nervous drain of recent experiences gave the cowardly enemy very promising ground for his assault. When Moses made his great mistake at the rock it is evident that he was an overwrought man, and although the weakness is given full uncovering and the result shown to be very grievous in a temporal way, he was never afterward repudi-

ated in history as a failure; rather was he with the Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration. David still held his place of high honour and value in Divine purposes, and his name runs to the end of Scripture with Divine recognition despite the grievous fallings in the way. He suffered, it is true, but God knows that in the lives of those who count for Him there are forces at work which are extra to the ordinary human weaknesses. This is made so clear in the case of Peter, whose terrible failure was said by the Lord to be the work of Satan; and there is no doubt but that Satan knew Peter's weak point and weak moment.

We must, however, bear in mind that, while the Scriptures on these matters are given us for our comfort, and to magnify the grace of God, they are not meant to weaken us or excuse our weakness, but to make us aware of how Satan can get an advantage, and to indicate the danger points along the way of spiritual usefulness.

In the case of Elijah before us, there is one thing that we want to note, and the noting of which we feel will be a help to some. It is this: in the moment of his weakness Satan sowed a lie in Elijah's mind, and Elijah accepted it. Our Lord said of Satan that "he is a liar, and the father thereof" (John viii. 44). In this case he begot the lie that Elijah was the only faithful prophet of God left in Israel. There was ground for that seed. The man was fighting a lonely battle; ploughing a lonely furrow; walking a lonely path. There is no doubt about that.

### Loneliness is a Part of the Price of Leadership

If we are seeking to go on with God to any degree beyond that which is commonly accepted as a true Christian life; if we are called to pioneer the way for any further advance in spiritual life or Divine service; if we are given a vision of God's will and purpose not seen by the general mass of God's people—or even the larger number of the servants of God—ours will be a lonely way.

There are many other ways in which we may feel aloneness. It may be for geographical reasons; or it may be because of an inward experience through which we are passing; an experience or phase which cannot be shared by another, even the one closest to us. All these and other reasons may respectively become our "wilderness" in which Satan comes, and, while there is a basic occasion, his business is to push things into the extra realm of untruth and tell us that we *are* actually and utterly



alone. It is not a rare thing for him to tell a child of God that God has left him or her.

Elijah verily believed that he was the only one left in faithfulness to God, and he repeated his plaint several times, "I only am left." He had lost sight of the possibility that the prophets reported by Obadiah to have been hidden might still be in that underground faithfulness, or some of them at least. But the Lord knew better and told him of seven thousand unsundering saints who would not capitulate to Jezebel or Baal. The fact is that what Elijah believed was positively not true. If we look at things horizontally we shall only see so far, but if we look from heaven we shall see much more.

Well, what is the answer? Firstly, the Lord's love has taken the *full* measure of human frailty before ever He called us to Himself, and therefore that love, being all-knowing, does not give up because it comes upon something unforeseen and not already accounted for.

Secondly, the Lord asks for nothing more than a heart toward Himself. That is the ground upon which He will go right on. *Only* positive, definite, and persisted-in unbelief and disobedience will make the Lord say, "Look here, My child, I love you and want to go on with you, and I *will* go on if only you will trust me and respond to me. But we cannot

go on until you have adjusted; we must just stand here and wait for that."

Thirdly, if it is true that the Lord neither leaves nor forsakes His own, it is equally true that they are not alone as to others of the Lord's own. There is the *fact*, altogether apart from the teaching, that "the body is one, and hath many members" (I Cor. xii. 12). That *fact* does not depend upon the doctrine, it is just a fact. Moreover it is constituted by the Holy Spirit Himself. He is the Spirit of unity; there is "the communion of the Holy Spirit"; i.e. the communion of believers in and by the Holy Spirit. There are always believers praying for "all saints," the vast majority of whom are utterly unknown to them in this world. If we would take our stand on God's fact in this matter, and, by faith, take the value of "all prayer for all saints" we should find a wonderful relief and reinforcement in our aloneness.

But let us face the fact that a certain measure and kind of loneliness *will* connect with any particular value which the Lord already has, or is seeking to have, in us, and we must accept this with courage, reminding ourselves that were it otherwise that particular value might not be possible. Jesus was able to meet many a difficult situation because He had learnt the secret in aloneness.

T. A-S.

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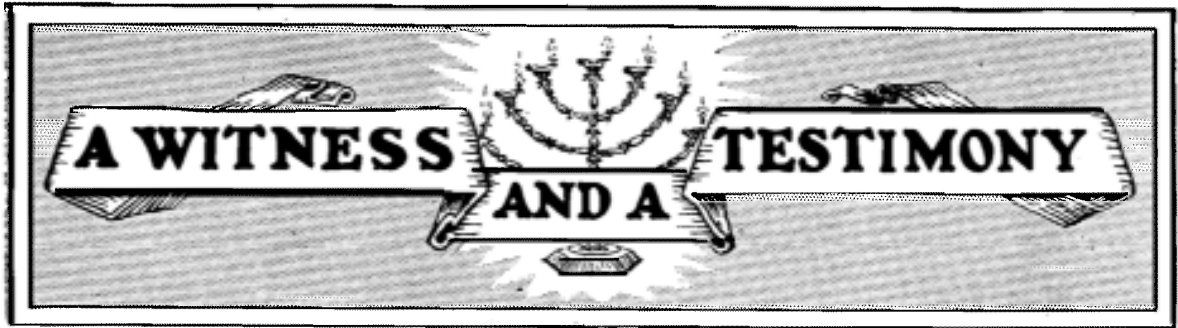
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## Four Greatnesses of Divine Revelation

### VI

#### THE GREATNESS OF THE RESURRECTION

*“. . . the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come”* (Eph. i. 19-21).

#### Christ Exalted the Perfect Representative Man

**O**UR object now, for the attaining of which we are so completely dependent upon the Lord, is to get inside those words and see and feel something of what they mean. If you thoughtfully read the whole passage, it will be recognised that this setting of Christ at God's right hand was with the object of installing Him as inclusive representative of all of us who believe. "To us-ward who believe." It is a related thing. He "made him to sit at his right hand"—the final step in the exercise of that exceeding great power in raising Him from the dead: and it is said at the end of the statement that He "gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body." He was not set there as one by Himself—as the exalted but isolated Christ, the honoured Lord—but, in the thought and intention of God, in a related way to us-ward who believe, to the Church which is His Body. The all-governing

presentation of Christ in the Word of God is that of Him in the position and capacity of representative Man. That is the thing which governs supremely in the full revelation of Jesus Christ. He is the incarnation of the Divine idea of humanity, but, strangely enough, that representation is ultimately projected into a region altogether beyond human experience. He is placed where no other man has ever been. Christ is set forth fully and finally as representative in an experience and position through and beyond death. I say, no other man has ever been there in all the history of men. At the first view, that very fact would seem to shatter the very conception of Him as representative. If He is representative in a realm and on a ground no other man has ever known, how can He be representative of all men? And yet, when you come to think about it more carefully, it is just the opposite. That is why and how He can be the representative, because perfect representation in any realm or connection demands the perfect realisation of all the intentions and possibilities of that realm. If you take a flower and say, That is the perfect specimen of its own kind; then it is requisite that that flower should embody all that ever that species was intended to be, and all the possibilities that were within it in its creation. It cannot be a perfect specimen until it has gone right through unto the full end of its own inherent and Divinely-appointed destiny; and Christ risen is—may I use the word?—the perfect specimen of all the Divine thought in man's creation, so that He must have gone

through into that realm which is beyond anything that any other man has known. He must be in a position and in a fulness which fully answers to the original thought of God for man.

### Christ Risen Dispers All Limitations

But we must get down to that. In the Bible, we have other people who were raised from the dead—in the Old Testament and in the New. Lazarus is an outstanding example. But we know, without much discussion, that there is a very great difference between Lazarus after his resurrection, and Christ after His. Lazarus, although raised from the dead, is still the same man. You have nothing to indicate that he is in any way changed, he has come back just as he was before. His was not, in this Divine sense, a resurrection; it was a resuscitation. There is a vast difference between resuscitation and resurrection. In the Lord Jesus we find that which is unique in this matter. The uniqueness of Christ is found in His nature, in what He was after His resurrection. Oh, there are so many differences, and they are so real that you find that even those who had had the closest association with Him and companied with Him in the most intimate way were not able to recognise Him except by a special, Divinely-given enablement. He was not accepting them on the old basis, He would allow none of the old affectionate human caresses and touches—"Touch me not" (John xx. 17): it was the gesture of the old level of natural life. On the other hand He did allow Himself to be touched, but it was to be the touch of faith. He invited one who was doubting to touch Him—"Reach hither thy hand, and put it into my side" (John xx. 27): this was to be faith, the invitation to faith to overcome doubt and unbelief. It is a different kind of relationship; He has gone out of one realm into another. Now the old limitations and ties obtain no more. Space has gone, time has gone; He does not depart, He disappears; He does not come, He is there. There are new powers here, new capacities, new abilities. Everything is now in a different realm, and yet so real. He is enforcing the reality of it, and necessarily so, because they are between two worlds, the world of what has been and the world which now is, and they have to learn the difference. It is the revelation of a new kind of life, a new order of things altogether. There is no pandering on His part to curiosity about the other world and the Unseen, but just the impress, the mighty impress, of *spiritual* reality—that is what He is seeking to bring home; and if we can see Christ risen, perceive

the nature of this Man on the resurrection side, we see in Him the end for which man was made, the representative of God's full thought for man—altogether outside and beyond the mere limitations of life as we know it, outside of the control of space and time, with powers of which we know very little, capacities which we all long for but only very dimly discern.

What has Christ done? He has got rid of all that which led to death and which death involved. Death is that which puts a limit upon everything, which comes in between heaven and earth, which brings man into bondage, which places a mighty No! over man's full development and spells vanity—vanity to all his struggles and efforts. Christ has dealt with that and put it out of the way, to make possible that mighty fulfilment of all that God ever intended for man. He has reversed the course of death and removed it as a barrier in the way of man's fulness, and in His resurrection has brought life and incorruption, incorruptibility, to light.

Hence, one of the first things that He did after His resurrection was to take up the Scriptures, and from Moses, the beginning of the Scriptures, right to the end of them as they existed at that time, indicate Himself in them all. All the Scriptures—what is that? That is history. The Scriptures are human history with God ever in view, and human history is the history of failure where God's thought is concerned; but now in resurrection Christ can take up the whole history of failure and impossibility and show how there has been present right through it that which was saying, This failure, this impossibility, is not forever, is not inevitable, is not the final factor; I am here! We know from the record of the raising of Lazarus just how the Lord used that particular truth. "Thy brother shall rise again." Yes, said Martha, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." He broke in—The last day! When I am present, the last day is here, time is gone, there is no yesterday, to-day and to-morrow—"I am the resurrection and the life." All time is encompassed and embraced and dismissed when I am here. "I AM"—we have heard that before: the Eternal One is the resurrection and the life because time goes out when eternity comes in. And all the Scriptures, having Him in view, have that which says, Yes, history on the earth may be what it is but I am here, and in the end all this will change, I will be the change of all this. That is in effect what He said on the day of His resurrection—I am alive, I have fulfilled all the Scriptures, I have gathered up all the Scriptures, all the history of man in his

relationship with God, and fulfilled it, and here I am, the realisation of all that God intended, and all that history has seemed to say is impossible.

### **The Church the Expression of Christ Risen and Exalted**

Now the New Testament shows us two things in relation to Christ risen and seated at the right hand of God. It shows us this—and this is what is here particularly in this passage in Ephesians as we have indicated—that the Church which is His Body in the Spirit now corresponds to Christ risen. “. . . gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body.” This is not a Body without a Head, and this is not a Head without a Body; it is one. In the same letter it is said that we, in the thought of God, are seated together with Him in the heavenlies. The Church, when on spiritual ground, corresponds to Christ risen. That is the first great thing that the New Testament teaches us, and that came particularly through Paul by revelation of the Spirit; and, even if the Church is only represented by a company, a small company, in one place on the earth, and that company is truly on the ground of Christ, time and space and all limitations are dismissed, and the uttermost bounds of the earth are touched in one moment. A little company here on the ground of Christ risen, by regeneration, by the mighty operation of that same Spirit which raised Him from the dead, in their innermost being most truly risen together with Christ on new creation ground and being governed by the Spirit—as that company functions in the Holy Spirit, space is dismissed, all geography goes out, the ends of the earth are touched from that point, and in a moment anything, anywhere, can happen. It is not a matter of having to wait for weeks and months and years. If the Lord wills it, the Church can effect it in a moment, time does not govern at all. You are outside that realm when you are in the Spirit; praying in the Holy Ghost is simply bringing into operation what Christ is at the right hand of God; it is the risen Christ functioning. So He says, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age.” “All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations” (Matt. xxviii. 18-20).

But who is to go? It is the Church that is to go, and His nucleus of the Church, His irreducible nucleus of the Church, is two. It is the bringing of the significance of the Body into view, a corporate thing. When there is a functioning in the Spirit it is nothing less than

Christ risen, ascended and exalted, going on with His work through His Body, with all those limitations dismissed. That is tremendous. Of course, it does not sound so extraordinary to us because we have heard it before, we know something about it in terms of teaching; but take that sort of thing out into a world that has never heard it, and it sounds ridiculous, fantastic, presumptuous. But that is where we have a Christianity that makes such tremendous demands upon faith. It is either true, or it is not true. If it is true, it is an immense thing. If it is not true, well, what fools we are! But here it is. Oh, that the Church might learn more of what it means to be in living union with a risen Christ!—a company, two or three or more, though limited physically here on this earth by time and space, yet really functioning in the Holy Spirit, so that the universal Christ—all that it means that He is there at God's right hand—is having some expression. I would to God that this could come home to you by the Spirit, that you could grasp it, for what differences it would make! We have a long way to go yet before this is adequately appreciated. But it is true.

We have said that Christ in resurrection at God's right hand is the representation of man collectively, according to God's mind. What does His presence there imply? What do the forty days after His resurrection say? That He is in another realm altogether, on other ground altogether. The old human, natural things have passed out, and He does not allow them. Everything is new—new powers, relationships, capacity, understanding. There is a whole new state of things which transcends the old and goes far beyond it; and what is possible now is beyond our ability to comprehend. When you touch these things, human language is a vain instrument for expression. “The exceeding greatness of his power”; the superlatives in this realm! Oh, for this enlargement by a new apprehension of the greatness of Christ in His Person, in His death, in His resurrection! Well, then, the supreme thing the New Testament shows is this, that the Church on its true, spiritual basis corresponds to Christ risen. Not ‘the Church’ that we know here on earth—it does not. But God's thought about the Church is not an impossible and merely idealistic one. It is a practical thing. Two saints, simple, humble, unimportant in this world, really meeting together in the Spirit, can be a functioning instrument of Him to Whom has been committed all authority in heaven and earth, and with them all these old limitations can be dismissed, and they can at one moment touch all the ends of



the earth. Do you believe that? That is really the meaning of our glorying in Christ risen. This has to be something more than emotion, more than glorious doctrine; yes, more than a truth to which we give some assent. It has to be very practical. Christ risen is the most practical proposition for the Church. When He was risen He said, "All authority"—and the literal is—"has just been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye *therefore* . . ."—spoken to the Church—"and lo, I am with you"—with all authority in heaven and on earth—"even unto the consummation of the age." We have not grasped the real meaning and value of that. We have simply selected fragments of it, and made it a basis of worldwide evangelisation or missionary enterprise. We have not gathered into it the mighty implications of Christ risen.

### The Literal the Consummation of the Spiritual

Another thing, which I will only mention, that is shown us in the New Testament in this connection is that the consummation of the spiritual will be the literal. This correspondence to Christ now is a spiritual matter. It is a thing of the spiritual life, the Spirit in us, and of our being in the Spirit; but there is the counterpart of that in the literal, in the consummation of the spiritual. The consummation of the spiritual is that this body of humiliation, this body of corruption, shall be changed to

be made like unto His glorious body, both individually and collectively. It will be an individual thing—that is what I Cor. xv means. It will also be a collective thing—the whole Body will be changed; the Church will be a *glorious* Church, a Church of glory, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing (Eph. v. 27), no touch of corruption, and no possibility of being corrupted; like unto His body of glory. That is the consummation of the spiritual, and the Apostle says that we have the earnest of that already in the Holy Spirit.

May the Lord give us some fresh glimpse of what His resurrection is intended to mean as a practical thing, and, if the practical meaning is to be pressed to some action, then let us apprehend it first by faith and then begin to act upon it. When we come together, let it not be just to say prayers and make all sorts of petitions, but to give the living Lord by His Spirit an opportunity to function beyond the range of locations and space and time, and Himself from the Throne through the Church to touch all realms on earth and in heaven and do the thing He has indicated to be His will. Why not now, seeing He is outside of time? Why accept delays if the Lord wills a thing? We want to be very much more practical. If it is true that we are one with a risen, enthroned Lord, it ought to have tremendous repercussions. May it be so!

T. A-S.

## The Things Which Befall Us

*"For we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning our affliction which befell us in Asia, that we were weighed down exceedingly, beyond our power, insomuch that we despaired even of life: yea, we ourselves have had the sentence of death within ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead: who delivered us out of so great a death, and will deliver: on whom we have set our hope that he will also still deliver us" (II Cor. i. 8-10).*

### The Fact of the Experience of Suffering

THE first thing that comes to us from this little bit of Paul's autobiography is the fact of this experience. He does not seem to regard it as some extraordinary thing. He takes it, it would seem, almost as the normal course of the life of a servant of God. He simply speaks of it as something which befell him in Asia—almost like a normal happening. Great and evidently terrible as it was, it is taken as something which just befell, happened,

occurred; and this would say to us that the tremendous experiences of adversity and suffering and trial through which the Lord's people go must not be regarded as spiritual catastrophes, as if everything has gone wrong, our universe is going to pieces, Satan is simply carrying everything away and the Lord is left stranded and defeated. That is a strong way of putting it, but it is said merely to draw attention to this fact, that in the course of the life of a very true and faithful and devoted servant who stands for the Lord's highest and fullest interests, things like this do befall him. The word here is better expressed by our word "converge upon." You and I, in the time of difficulty and adversity, deep suffering and trial, are so often tempted to think that something very wrong has taken place, and there is a big question as to whether it ought to be, seeing we belong to the Lord. We are really in heart devoted to the Lord, we mean business with Him—and now look at this! Well, it befell and it befalls. We must

get to the point of a conclusion about this, that there is no charm resting upon the life of the most devoted child of God, there is no special providence to say that no adversity shall overtake, shall befall. It just does happen, it is a fact, and that is where we begin.

It happened to Paul, it befell him, it "converged upon" him, but he does not raise any questions at all about God or about spiritual issues in such a way as to lead him into difficulties with the Lord. Are you one whose way has been, and perhaps still is, one of great adversity, trial, suffering, perplexity? It has happened to you, it has overtaken, it has befallen you. Well, Paul is not alone in this, that it is a part of the course of things. It has a meaning; but my point at the moment is that these things are facts. You cannot get away from them. You must settle down to it that they are facts to be recognised and accepted as making up the lot of a true servant and child of God. That is where we begin.

#### Exercise in Regard to the Experience

But then there is another thing here. Of course, we do not know what was the exact nature of this particular trial. Some think it refers to Paul's time in Ephesus and that he was nigh unto being flung to wild beasts in the arena. He did say on another occasion that he fought with beasts at Ephesus, speaking metaphorically (I Cor. xv. 32). It may have been that, but it is more probable that it was some terrible illness which overtook him, some sickness which brought him to an end of all hope. Whatever it was, he says: "We despaired even of life; yea, we ourselves have had the sentence of death within ourselves." You wonder why he repeats that word "ourselves." That is the difficulty of translation. If it were put into literal English, it would be something like this. "We doomed ourselves"; that is, we came to a verdict ourselves about the situation. As to ourselves, our verdict was—This is the end, death! But what we want particularly to note is the exercise that the affliction produced in Paul. Evidently he had been looking into this thing, scrutinising it and saying, What is the Divine meaning in my situation? What does the Lord mean by this? Although it looks like a hap, it has befallen me, yet the Lord has something bound up with it. There was enquiry and exercise about the situation, and in his prayerful investigation, he comes to realise what the Lord's mind is, and he sums it all up in the little word—*that*. "We have had the sentence of death within ourselves, *that* we should not trust in ourselves, but in God . . ." All this happened in order

that . . . There was a Divine object, a Divine meaning, something quite precise. In order that . . .

Well then, the second step is that we must have inward exercise in order to find out what the Lord means by the things which befall us, because nothing happens to a true child of God without the Lord having a meaning in it. There must be exercise until we come to the point where we are able to say, Oh, I see—that is the Lord's object and aim and purpose. It is in order that . . . What a mighty "that"! It is the issue of a prayerful enquiry as to why we are permitted to go through some of the dark ways of trial and suffering in which we despair. We come to an end, and we pass sentence upon ourselves. We say, "Well, I am finished, I am at an end; so far as I am concerned, it is death, there is no hope." We pass the sentence. But we believe that God has something in it and we have got to get that out of it; the result must be a concrete "that . . ."

#### The Explanation—"God Who Raiseth the Dead"

That leads right up to the final thing, ". . . that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead." It is a passing right over from one ground to another, from the ground of ourselves to the ground of God. In ourselves there is death, an end; but with God there is a beginning—"who raiseth the dead." It is the whole history of the Church gathered up into a little clause of four words. It is the whole object of the Church in this dispensation, wrung out of the soul exercise of this man Paul. What is the history of the Church? What is the Divine object in the Church in this dispensation? It is that in every part God shall have opportunity of showing that by Jesus Christ He has conquered death and triumphed over all the limitations and all the finalities of what is natural, and has made possible the limitless fulness of resurrection life. Dear friends, it is true that at the last the Church will be seen to have been God's instrument in establishing in this universe the fact that through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, death, that age-long enemy of God and man, has been absolutely destroyed. That truth is going to be worked out through the Church. "Now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavens might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph. iii. 10). In all that is this central thing—death. What do we mean by death? We are not talking simply of physical death, but of a great

spiritual thing. Death is the thing which pronounces an end. Whenever you and I say, This is the end, we are finished!—we have succumbed to death. That is the verdict of death, for death always says that. The Church should never believe in ends—that is to capitulate to death. Although a thousand times in ourselves we might feel the end has come, in the very experience which brings us to that place God has invested a new realisation that in Him that finality is cancelled out. We should never expect an end until God says, That is the end! He is the God of hope, “who . . . begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away” (I Pet. i. 3-4). If we leave out the negative and read only the positive statement in the passage which we are considering we read: “That we should . . . trust in God who raiseth the dead.”

Are you expecting ends, limitation, feeling that for you there is no hope, no future? Do not believe it! Get down to this and see it as the great eternal fact—God is trying to bring us to the place where we stop expecting what the Devil is constantly offering through circumstances—death, an end, limitation. God is all the time thinking of increase, enlargement. That is the history of the Church. Again and again, generally and in individual cases, it has been said, This is the end: it is all over: the Lord has done with us; and yet—oh, how slow we are to learn it, to get it fixed, established!—it does not prove to be the end, does it? We find that there is still a lease of life, still something more in the Lord's intention; and even when the point is

really reached of an end here on earth, we do not believe that is the end of life and work—it is emancipation unto fulness.

These are very simple things, but all hang upon this little word “that.” God allows very deep and hard and painful things—things which bring us in ourselves really to the point of giving up, where we pass the verdict of death upon ourselves. He allows them with this object, that—however much we may have known and proved the truth in our earlier experience—He may bring us yet a stage further into the power and good of it, that God raiseth the dead. If He does that, then there is hope for anybody and for anything. The Lord give us more of this disciplined, instructed, enlightened faith. We cannot come to it by being told it, by hearing it a thousand times, but only by experience. Some of you know what we are talking about. You know despair, you know hopeless situations, you know what it is to come to the place where you are finished and throw up your hands. If you do not, you may know it yet. The Lord is after getting us, as many as He can, through to that place where, in and through His Church, death is swallowed up in victory, death is no more. That is practically the last word of the Bible. Nearly the first words of the Bible are about the entrance of death; the tree of life was cut off. At the end of the Bible we read “Death shall be no more” (Rev. xxi. 4). That has got to be wrought out in an instrument, and we know that that process is very practical. The Lord enable us to learn that lesson and gain the vantage ground of the triumph of Christ's resurrection.

T.A.-S.

## The Church at Prayer

“Peter therefore was kept in the prison: but prayer was made earnestly of the church unto God for him” (Acts xii. 5).

**N**OW about that time Herod the king put forth his hands to afflict certain of the church.” About what time? The time of great blessing and mighty increase. The time of conversions, of extension of the Testimony in many directions, of new outpourings of the Spirit and gracious expressions of brotherly love among the saints. When God is stretching forth His hand, then it is that Herod seeks to interfere. And yet, though we all agree with this in theory, we are so often perplexed and stumbled when it happens to us. James is killed, and Peter is sentenced to death. We

therefore conclude that there must be something wrong with us, that the Lord has a controversy with us, ‘for,’ says unbelief, ‘this could never have happened if we had been right with the Lord.’ But it did happen to a spiritual people who were right with the Lord. Indeed, it happened just because they were so true to Him. Satan will always seek to stir up trouble where his kingdom is really being menaced, and God will permit him to do so, for the trouble can be made to turn out for God's greater glory.

“But Prayer . . .”

“Peter therefore was kept in the prison.” There were no human rights for him. No



appeal could be made for justice; there was no one on earth who could help. Peter's situation was a hopeless one. He was kept in the prison, heavily guarded day and night, until the death sentence was passed and the day of execution had almost dawned. Was that the last word? Humanly it might have been, but there is one further factor. The verse continues: "but prayer . . ." That is the church's answer to Herod, and indeed to every challenge; and it is a most effectual answer, for it brings God in. Peter's perilous state is sometimes used as an illustration of the dire need of a man without Christ, and as such it encourages us to pray for awakening, illumination and deliverance for those who sit in the shadow of death, bound in affliction and iron. The real parallel, however, is different, for Peter was a servant of the Lord with a vital ministry yet to be fulfilled among men. It was Peter's ministry as much as his life which was in jeopardy. Every kind of restraint was placed upon him, with a view to the total extinction of his service for the Lord. "But prayer . . ." Thank God for that saving factor! Herod . . . but prayer! The sentence of death . . . but prayer! The chains, the guard, the cell . . . but prayer! More guards, the first ward, the second ward . . . but prayer! And last the great iron gate . . . but prayer! Every expression of satanic power had to yield to prayer. I am glad that it is specifically stated how the iron gate opened. It was not even by intervention of the angel who accompanied Peter, but purely and wholly in answer to the prayers of the people of God. It opened "of its own accord," but it opened because the church was at prayer.

### The Prayer—of the Church

It was the church which travailed in prayer, not Peter. The apostle doubtless knew of his danger, but he evidently felt it right to commit himself to the Lord and then settle down to sleep. He has been criticised for sleeping when he should have been praying. All I can say to that is that if I had reached the eve of my execution I should find it much easier to pray than to sleep. Surely his was the supreme expression of faith, faith without any personal ends to be served. It was right for Peter to sleep, just as it was right for the church to pray. Alas! that nowadays the church does the sleeping and leaves Peter to pray for himself!

The church prayed. Individual names are not mentioned, for they do not matter. The leaders were unavoidably absent, but still it was the church that prayed. In such cases of

satanic challenge the really adequate answer is not only prayer, but the prayer of the church. The Devil has not changed. He still has his Herods, as bitterly opposed to divine things as ever. God, also, has not changed. Praise His Name, He still answers prayer. Nor has the church changed—the true church. Individuals may come and go, but the church is a spiritual entity which lives on in the power of the Holy Ghost. When I listen to some ritualistic liturgies I am impressed by their incongruity in this modern world. They seem so out of date. They carry our minds back to other ages and manners of life which are quite foreign to us to-day. But when I turn to Acts xii I might be reading an account in last week's "Christian" of some up-to-date story of the power of God. The church has not changed. Let us not sigh for Pentecostal days, nor sentimentalise over the church of the apostolic age, but rather recognise that we are in the very same church to-day, and that we too may pray in the mighty Name of Jesus.

Prayer was made earnestly. It was not a mere prelude to the work of God, nor a pious afterthought. It was their work. They knew in fact what is often only theory to us, that they, of themselves, could do nothing in this matter. They were helpless. Salvation must be altogether of the Lord, or it could never be at all. So they stretched themselves out in earnest appeal to Heaven, praying not because it was the weekly Prayer Meeting where the correct thing to do is to pray, but because they desperately needed God.

### Prayer—to God

So we read that prayer was made of the church "unto God." These last two words may seem unnecessary. To whom else could they pray? I think this is meant to emphasise the fact that theirs was true prayer. It represented a heart cry to God Himself. It is so easy for us to slip into the habit of praying; to become adepts at saying the right thing in the correct phraseology; to follow a Prayer Meeting tradition. In that case, while we do not pray to ourselves or to men, we are really far more self conscious than conscious of God. All unawares we tend to be governed more by the impression our words are making on those around us than on the impression they are making in the presence of the Lord. We are earnest when we are vocal because we want to make a good job of our prayer, but we are inattentive or critical when others are praying because our hearts are not moved. To us the act of praying is more important than the answer to prayer. It was not so with them.

Whoever spoke or whoever was silent, whether the best phrases were used or not, they were of one heart in making an earnest appeal to Almighty God. That is a true expression of the church at prayer.

#### **Prayer—With a Definite Objective**

But perhaps the most important emphasis should be the object of their praying—it was “for him.” How often do we lack both direction and purpose in our prayer gatherings because of scatteredness and generalities. Even in our private devotions we need to watch this, but how much more in corporate prayer. The church gathered for prayer means much more than the aggregate individual intercessions of a number of Christian people. It means, or should mean, that Christ is livingly expressed in His members in such a spiritually powerful way as to bring to bear His complete Lordship over any given situation. We don’t have to imagine or manufacture such situations; what we have to do is to recognise the true nature of the challenge and take it up in the Name of the Lord. They prayed for Peter not merely because they loved him but because Divine interests were bound up with his being alive and free. Peter was the issue, so they concentrated their prayers on Peter.

They did not pray for themselves. That seems to be the inveterate tendency of the people of God. Unbelief asserts itself as much in Prayer Meetings as anywhere else. It is very subtle, often assuming the guise of humility and spirituality. If the church had begun to wonder why Peter was in prison, becoming depressed with their own sense of failure or inadequacy, they might have commenced by interceding for Peter but they would soon have been praying for themselves. Instead of concentrating prayer on the real issue they would have been repeating the same requests concerning their own spiritual condition which had so often been the theme of previous Prayer Meetings. They might have felt better (though that is doubtful!), but Satan would have laughed and Peter would never have emerged from prison. They began by praying for him, and they kept on praying for him, refusing to be seduced into turning in upon themselves in unbelief.

They did not pray for James. There were no prayers for the dead in that church! They did not discuss in prayer the problem and the mystery of this sudden death. They did not explore the question of their own part in it, reproaching themselves as though James’ death was due to their lack of faith. James was with the Lord. It is useless to question God’s

sovereign ways, for we all know how paralysed we become when we allow a question to preoccupy us. They refused to be sidetracked into considerations of why God had allowed an apparent calamity. Peter might have gone to his death while they were still wondering. “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but the things that are revealed belong unto us . . . that we may do . . .” (Deut. xxix. 29). So far as they were concerned the issue was a live and not a dead one. It did not concern James but Peter. Peter was kept in the prison, therefore when the church prayed it prayed “for him.”

They all prayed for him. What a pity it is when a Prayer Meeting only consists of the isolated effort of a number of individuals praying audibly! One has a personal concern; another has a particular request which is on their heart; and yet another is specially interested in some piece of work. So the prayers range over wide fields, perhaps in a disconnected way, the various members each contributing their own personal exercise. Because of their own private prayers or their life with the Lord in the Word they are tempted to introduce their own personal thoughts, instead of being adjustable to the Spirit in order that the utterance of each may be the true expression of the Spirit’s cry in the whole company. They prayed “for him.” They each had their own way of doing it but they united in one spiritual objective, setting aside all that was merely personal for the time being in order to be free for true corporate intercession. This was something more than a number of Christians praying in their own secret chamber: this was the church at prayer.

Although their prayers were focused I do not think that they were limited or circumscribed. I rather imagine that while they prayed for Peter’s release their prayers were not confined to any merely earthly realm. They rose into the heavenlies, where they wrestled with the spiritual evil which was responsible for this attack upon the work of God. They not only made supplication concerning the visible threat, but they prayed right through to the cause; and I think that their prayer did more than open the prison for Peter, it brought Herod crashing down in ruin from his throne.

#### **Prayer—Issuing in Spiritual Victory**

What is the intention of the Holy Spirit in recording Herod’s downfall as a direct sequence of this incident? Is it not to emphasize the great spiritual victory registered by the church’s prayer? Not only was there a

visible proof of God's faithfulness in the mercy granted to Peter, but there was also a victory for the Lord in a far wider realm. From the day the church prevailed in prayer Herod's doom was settled. It took a little time for the outworking to be realized, but it happened, and it happened in answer to the prayer of the church. All true prayer encompasses the immediate and local need, but it also presses beyond to the spiritual issue of the supreme authority of God's Son, receiving the needed deliverance and also registering a spiritual impact upon the very throne of evil. The prayer brings immediate glory to the Lord, but it will bring a much fuller expression of Divine sovereignty in due course. What a heartening transformation this chapter represents! At the beginning the church is being crushed while Satan is triumphant; at the end, however, it is Satan who is crushed while the church has great increase. The change pivots around verse 5—"but prayer was made . . . of the

church. . . ."

### Prayer—Leading to Deepened Worship

I am glad that they were not above being surprised at the Lord's goodness. Some think it a mark of spirituality to know exactly what God will do and how He will do it, so that at the end they merely indicate with some placency that they are not surprised. Peter was not like that. He found it difficult to believe that he was not dreaming. It was all so wonderful he could hardly credit it. And as for the praying saints they were even harder to convince. I find it comforting that Spirit-filled people were still human enough to be amazed at the Lord's goodness. No doubt their praises were all the more fervent. It will be a poor day for us when we cease to be surprised at the Lord's mighty working, for surely wonder is an integral part of true worship.

H.F.

## The Spiritual Clinic

*"For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few sleep" (I Corinthians xi. 30).*

**I**N the above words the Apostle gives the note he has made after holding a spiritual clinic in relation to the sicknesses and debilities among the Corinthian believers. Indeed, he goes beyond that and gives the reason for the death of "not a few." Evidently things were pretty bad there as to the physical. Incidentally, and yet as a striking part of the whole, it is impressive that so much physical sickness and—apparently—unnecessary death should be amongst those who were said to "come behind in no gift," including the gift of healing (i. 7; xii. 9).

Now let us clear this ground by saying emphatically that there was a definite reason for this condition, and evidently one which was based upon a state of things which should have been known to be wrong. That just means two things.

One—all sickness, ailment, and death is *not* due to specific sin on the part of the one afflicted. This surely goes without saying, but we say it strongly lest any sufferer should take on condemnation unnecessarily. There are many sufferers "in the will of God."

The other thing is that there must have been a knowledge which put these believers into the category of those who knew better and were not sinning in ignorance. It would indeed be a grievous thing if the Divine counsels decided

that such a definite pronouncement should be made where people were totally ignorant of their sin and wrong doing.

The whole tone of this letter shows that the state of things was one which called for stern words and not soft advice.

That brings us right up to the very point of this particular word. There is a principle which we want to indicate. The actual nature of "not discerning the body" is not the object of our enquiry. The principle is this:—

If any one or any body of the Lord's people should have come to know of Divine truth in general or particular, and should have definitely or ostensibly stood with it, they have come into touch, not with abstract doctrine, but with the Living God, and with that which involves Him. The effect must be either positively unto life or death. They can never remain as they were before; sooner or later there will be an issue. Should that Divine truth have come their way, or they have come its way, in something more than a mere tradition, that is, by a real first-hand work of the Holy Spirit, the issues will be the more immediate and positive. Should such a people—as in this basic instance at Corinth—know by a Holy Spirit ministry the truth of

a. The essential vital oneness of believers with a crucified and risen Christ—implying their own death to the self-life, and resurrection to live "henceforth unto him"—and then bring their old nature life positively into the



new realm, they must meet the impact of the death-dealing blow of the Cross.

Or should they know the truth of

b. The essential oneness and relatedness of all believers as "one loaf, one body," and then act in any way which definitely violates that relatedness, such must suffer the consequences of getting away from the "covering" and safeguarding which—in some undefined, but very real way—is bound up with spiritual corporateness. There it is, and if we understood the laws and workings of the protective values of our physical bodies, and realised how a disturbed relatedness in function leads to suffering and death—unless put right—we should know that God has constituted the whole physical universe upon spiritual principles. Further, we should realise that the term "Body" as to the Church is no mere metaphor, but something very real.

It is just not possible to accept any Divine revelation without being involved in its principles, and suffering if those principles are violated. So the Apostle says "For this cause," i.e. the reason is this. You cannot profess that Christ is Lord, and then be your own Lord. You cannot be a member of a family and ignore the family and be as though you *were* the family. You cannot be a member of a body and then make your own plans and carry out your own arrangements without regard to laws of relatedness. This carries its own laws of retribution, but there is the Holy Spirit to be reckoned with and taken into account. We may slip up and default and the corrections of the Lord be gentle, but the matter of responsibility is one that varies according to opportunity, privilege, and position.

T. A-S.

## The New Day of the Spirit

### III

#### Abraham's Seed

**WE** are considering the deeper and fuller meaning of what came in on the day of Pentecost—the nature and order of an entirely new day in this world's history, that nature and order being essentially spiritual: a new order and character introduced by the advent of the Holy Spirit to constitute everything immediately spiritual; not indirectly and ultimately, but immediately spiritual.

#### The Voice of the Spirit the Governing Factor

One of the primal features of this new day is this—take careful note of it because it is the key and the basis of everything—that the voice of the Spirit is to be taken account of rather than what is going on in the religious world around. It is that which cleaves things asunder, puts things into two different realms in this book. With this new age we see on the one hand in the religious world that which claims authority with power, position and influence, which has established itself and taken possession, but which is shown to be something which is not according to the Spirit of God. On the other hand, over against that, we see what is brought out into such clear, manifest relief, that to hear and to take account of the voice of the Spirit of God may be, and very often is, another thing altogether. You recall Stephen's defence. You know that he comprehends the whole of this history. He starts with Abraham. "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham" (Acts vii. 2). That is the beginning of this religious history, and

he traces right through stage by stage until he arrives at the murder of the Lord Jesus, and he sums it up in one great declaration, sweeping away the whole ground of that established thing on the earth, and saying, as comprehending it all, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit" (Acts vii. 51). Something spiritual, a taking note of the voice of the Spirit of God, is something very different indeed from an established religious order on this earth, and very often runs directly counter to it. That is a strong statement but it is said in order that we may immediately get to the very heart of what it is the Lord is seeking in this present age—a people of a spiritual life who are governed by the Spirit of God, who take account of what *the Spirit* says, and are obedient and conform thereunto. It is a spiritual people God is after in this age, not religious people. Paul has built a very great spiritual structure upon this very principle. A large part of his letter to the Romans and the whole of his letter to the Galatians and of the letter to the Hebrews—whoever wrote that letter, I think there is little doubt that the influence of Paul is found in it and it comes altogether into line with the other two on this very matter—is occupied with the sole object of pointing out that traditional religion is one thing and life in the Spirit is another; that religion as here on this earth in all its forms may be one thing, while what is of the Spirit of God may be altogether another thing. That is what Paul set out to make clear, and he built this tremendous edifice upon this fact. If you read Gala-

tians carefully in the light of that, you will see that that is what he is after—to divide between this religious thing and this other which is of the Spirit.

You notice that Abraham has quite a place in this book of the Acts. Note, for example, the following fragment:

*“ For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him ” (Acts ii. 39).*

If you want to know what that promise is, you have to turn to Galatians, and you find at once it is linked with Abraham.

*“ . . . that upon the Gentiles might come the blessing of Abraham in Christ Jesus; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith ” (Gal. iii. 14).*

“ For to you is the promise.” That is the word on the day of Pentecost, and it refers to the coming of the Spirit.

*“ . . . who are Israelites; whose is the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises ” (Rom. ix. 4).*

Abraham has quite a place here in this book in relation to the Holy Spirit, the promise.

### The Seed of Abraham

The first thing we see here is that the challenge of the new age, the new day and its meaning, was first presented to the seed of Abraham, and the nature of the challenge was that they should become a spiritual seed of Abraham as something more than a natural seed. The significance of the day of Pentecost is just that. Now by the coming of the Spirit a transition is to be made, a change is to take place. The natural seed of Abraham should become a spiritual seed of Abraham. There is a difference between the seed of Abraham and the children of Israel. The seed of Abraham is racial; the children of Israel is national. We shall speak about that when we come to the elect nation. Here the racial side of things, the seed of Abraham, is in view; but Paul makes it perfectly clear in his letter to the Romans and to the Galatians that those that are of the Spirit are children of Abraham, not those which are of the flesh.

We have said before that Paul's letters were all written and circulated before ever the book of the Acts was written, so that the spiritual things were already there established in the teaching of the Lord's people, and the people were able to interpret this survey of the history in the light of spiritual things; and that is

exactly what we are doing now. We have the spiritual interpretation of Acts right in our hands. We have the letter to the Galatians in our hands before ever we approach this book of the Acts, and what does it say? Well, the challenge to the seed of Abraham is that they are not established before God on natural grounds: they can only be established before God on spiritual grounds. What they are naturally is not what God is seeking, but what they are spiritually. “ First that which is natural; then that which is spiritual,” and it is that which matters. That is the object of the Lord—a spiritual seed of Abraham.

### A People Not Numbered Among the Nations

We have much by way of illustration as to what God's thought was for this spiritual seed. He chose sovereignly in grace. You know how Paul argues that the law did not exist when God chose Abraham and his seed; that choice was not on the ground of law at all, not of works, not of anything that was in them or that they did or tried to do. It was just in His sovereign grace that He chose and marked them out; and the remarkable thing is that that nation has borne its own natural characteristics right through history which have never been lost. I remember the late Samuel Schor saying that in any part of this world he could always, without a word, detect a Jew, no matter how much the Jew had been absorbed into the nation. That is saying a lot. I think he used the phrase “ a son of Abraham ”; that was his way of speaking. The mark is there, something which distinguishes, embodying a spiritual principle which is brought out in this new spiritual race belonging to this age—but not now of Christians marked off by their physiognomy, nor by their language, nor by their particular country. There is no doubt that the hand of God was upon Balaam, although he was not a very willing and joyous prophet under the hand of God; but the Spirit of God made Balaam say about Israel as he looked from the top of the mountain: “ It is a people that dwelleth alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations ” (Num. xxiii. 9). There is surely a spiritual principle there—that this spiritual seed of Abraham which has been brought in with the Day of Pentecost is a people distinguished from all other people, whether by physiognomy or not. I believe that if we are living in the radiance of Divine life, there will be something of it betrayed by our faces. At any rate, the world will know something if we are really living in touch with the Lord, and there will be a language which only the spiritual can enjoy and understand.



There will be those spiritual counterparts of the seed of Abraham, a people different from all the rest.

Now, the tragedy of what is called 'the Church' has so often been, and perhaps is more to-day than ever, that that distinctiveness is being lost. It seems to-day as if a set is being made in some way to remove all the offence and all the difference, and to get us near to people without anything that clashes, in the hope of winning them. Yes, that is what is going on in the religious world around; it is a conforming to this age. But what came in at Pentecost is fundamentally this, that this people of the Spirit are so utterly different in the very centre of their being, different altogether from all other peoples: and their power and influence lie in that fact. You cannot fit them in with other things, and it is not because they are awkward and difficult and deliberately irritate people, but there is that which, by reason of their spiritual constitution marks them off; and if they did but know it, this is the secret of their influence in the world. The progress and increase of spiritual life mean this, that the gap widens all the time between the children of God and those in the world who are not such. That is not to be taken literally in this sense, that we begin a mistaken system of hiving off, shutting ourselves up, getting out of touch. That is a wrong application of the principle. The Lord Jesus is pre-eminently our example in that He could move in any circle, and He did so deliberately—publicans and sinners, all classes—He moved amongst them, but His power over them was in His basic difference from them. Let us be careful how we are caught in this great movement of conforming to this age. To conform is to lose spiritual power. Well, spiritual seed is what God is after, a spiritual seed of Abraham.

### A Seed of Promise

What was that seed? It is said to be according to promise. The Apostle marks it out by that word "promise." He distinguishes thereby between Ishmael and Isaac. God never promised Ishmael; he was not the son of promise, therefore he never stood before God in the fulfilment of His thought and intention. He came into conflict with the whole thought of God. But Isaac was the son of promise. What does that mean? It does not mean that God just said, I will give you a son. The promise means more than that. It means that God had taken His place with Isaac, God had committed Himself to Isaac. He never committed Himself to Ishmael. A promise is

something more than a verbal understanding or undertaking. It is a committal. I have given my promise, and my name, my honour and all my resources are involved. If I am a man of honour, then I am committed, with all that I have, to see that the realisation of the purpose in that direction is brought about. I am committed up to the hilt when I have given my promise. God was committed to Isaac, and that is why it was not possible for Isaac to be eventually swallowed up of death; he must be a child of resurrection. If he dies, God's honour is involved and goes down with Isaac. Isaac was the son of promise in that sense, that God was covenanted to him. "In Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Gen. xxi. 12). Now you know how Paul works that out in his Galatian letter, and it comes back into Acts. He works Acts out in his Galatian letter. Again, the seed of Abraham is not that which is natural, but that which is spiritual. "They that are of faith, the same are sons of Abraham" (Gal. iii. 7). They that are of faith are Abraham's seed. "He saith not, And to thy seeds, as of many: but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" (Gal. iii. 16).

God is committed to that spiritual seed, that counterpart of Isaac. He is that Son of resurrection. "... whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it" (Acts ii. 24). Why? Because God is bound up with Him, God is in Him, God is one with Him. And we are all children of Abraham in that sense by faith, and all sons of God through faith, in Christ Jesus (Gal. iii. 26). That is how it is worked out—the spiritual seed of promise to which God is committed, and which cannot therefore be engulfed of death, but must know all the Divine resource in the power of resurrection.

### A Resurrection Seed

That brings in one of the major basic principles and truths of this spiritual seed, that it is a resurrection seed, and that its history is to be characterised by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. I cannot lay enough emphasis upon that. It is not just a truth enunciated, it is the most searching and testing thing that you and I can have to do with—that, if we are the spiritual seed of Abraham in Christ by faith, we are called to have our whole history based upon this fundamental law—the power of His resurrection. It is something stated as a truth, but it is something to be taken hold of by faith. Again and again in the course of our history we shall be at the place where there is no hope but in



"God who raiseth the dead" (II Cor. i. 9) if there is to be any future at all. We shall come there in our own spiritual history, we shall come there in our own soul life—that we are at an end of our resources, mind, heart and will. We may come oftentimes in our very physical life to the place where, if God does not do something, it is an end. We shall come there in the work of God—where everything seems to declare that this is the finish of the work, there is nothing more possible; but now is the occasion for the God Who raiseth the dead, the God of promise, the God of Isaac, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is not just a Bible teaching. This is searching truth. We have to have our life based upon it and to believe it, and when it begins to work we must remember what is happening. I have no doubt that we have all accepted it as a truth, we believe it as something set forth; but when it begins to work in us, somehow we lose the whole thing. When we really do get to an end and say, This is the finish! we begin to accept it as the finish, we agree that all is finished. Instead of that, we should not trust in ourselves but in God. "Should not trust in ourselves"—that is negative. The positive is—"We ourselves have had the sentence of death within ourselves, *that we should . . . trust . . . in God who raiseth the dead.*" That is very practical. It will find us out many times, if we are men and women of the Spirit.

Now, you say: That is extraordinary—I always thought if only I was filled with the Spirit, if I really knew the meaning of Pentecost, I should always be on top in the full flood of life; surely there is a contradiction? Not at all! This resurrection life works primarily and firstly in our spirit, and it is from there that we have got to come up in mind and in body. The real working of the Spirit is like that. You are waiting and crying for the Lord to come and touch you on the outside, to lift you, to quicken you. You are waiting for something to happen that you can sense somewhere in the circumference of life. Death is there in the realm of your soul, your mind, your sensibilities, your body, your surroundings; you are waiting for the Lord to do something there. No, that is natural, that day has passed in the order of God. You have to know a touch of life in your spirit. It may come by a word from the Lord. If you are called to the ministry of the Word you may be completely dry and dark and dead for the next bit of ministry which looms ahead, but when God's moment comes, the word of the Lord comes to you and from that moment the

ministry begins to open out and you fulfil it; that is spiritual ministry. Or in any other connection the principle holds good—the power of resurrection begins in our spirit. We have to know it there, and then in faith move on that, and we find that mind and body come into line for all that the Lord wants. "First that which is natural; then that which is spiritual." That is the law of the Lord now; this is the "afterward" day. The day of the natural passed with the day of Pentecost; things were all outward until then.

You know how true that was in Israel's case. They had only to do something outward and God responded. But not now; you cannot get anything by law now. You can observe all the ritual, but you never get anything from God that way. This is the "afterward," it is spiritual; it is now a life in and by the Spirit.

To reinforce what we have been saying, let us remind ourselves of the fact that God never committed Himself in this matter of the promise of Isaac until the thing was utterly impossible naturally. The promise was never given until the whole situation was a natural impossibility. Ishmael—"first that which is natural"; but God is looking on, He has in principle something more in view, He is after the spiritual, and so He gave His promise to Abraham, and with it committed Himself, only when things were absolutely impossible naturally for the realisation of His promise. Are you prepared to accept that as a working principle in life all the way along? You cannot have anything more testing than that. It is very real, it is desperately real, so real that when you are in it you can do any desperate thing. It is so real that if you are not alive to this other side, if you do not believe in God Who raiseth the dead, anything can happen. But the God of resurrection comes in only when resurrection is the only thing possible; and resurrection is God's prerogative alone. This is a matter for Almighty God alone, that is all there is to it. Unless Almighty God comes in, then there is no prospect, no hope whatsoever. That is a law of life for the spiritual; that is the nature of things in this new age.

### The Sign of Circumcision

Now, God followed this up with a sign, an outward mark of a spiritual significance. He gave to Abraham the sign of circumcision. It became the mark of all the seed of Abraham, distinguishing them from all other peoples, and establishing a law. Let us be sensible about this, even if it is a delicate subject. It established a law that all the fruit of life from

that time onward was to be wholly for God. That is the meaning of circumcision—to be wholly separated unto God. God was very meticulous about that. You remember that extraordinary incident in the life of Moses. Moses had met God in the bush, God had spoken to him about His intentions, and then God had commissioned him as the deliverer of His people, and Moses was on his way to fulfil his Divinely-given commission; and then you have this statement—“ . . . the Lord met him and sought to kill him ” (Ex. iv. 24). An extraordinary thing that the man Divinely called, chosen and commissioned should be met by God with intent to slay him! God was saying, in effect: Yes, but, after all, nothing of it is possible; with all that vision, with all that purpose, with all that intention, it is all suspended until something has happened. And you notice what happened. It was made quite clear what the difficulty was—Moses had not circumcised his son; and when that was done, he went on and fulfilled his task. All the fruit of his life was to be held for God, everything was to be upon this basis, that the flesh is out of the way, and all is of the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit, not the fruit of the flesh, for God. Oh, what a history is bound up with that! Paul takes that up again in the letter to the Galatians and says in substance: It is not circumcision of the flesh at all in this new day; that all belongs to the natural, that belongs to yesterday; we have come into a new day, and now circumcision is circumcision of the heart where everything is unto God, and the flesh put away. Writing to the Colossians, he explains that when he says we were “ buried with him in baptism ” (Col. ii. 12), and in that connection he says, “. . . ye were circumcised with a . . . circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ ” (Col. ii. 11). It is the Cross dealing with that self-life which will come even into the service of God, into a Divine commission—that uncircumcised Philistine hand that will always be meddling with Divine things, even with the Ark itself. Yes, we are all capable of that. It is the peril that is always nearest to us of bringing our natural life in some kind of impingement upon Divine things, getting into the Lord’s work ourselves, doing it ourselves, being interested in the Lord’s things ourselves. It takes the Spirit of God in His perfect knowledge and understanding and insight to take the full measure of this self-life; we cannot do it.

But here is the point—this is the day of the Spirit, and those who are the spiritual seed of Abraham, who are now under the power of the

Spirit, governed by the Spirit, will be made alive by the Spirit continually to that which is of the Spirit and that which is not. The more we go on with the Lord, the fuller and clearer will become our perception as to what is spiritual and what is natural, even in our Christian life. It is a whole life of education. Things that we thought at one time were quite all right, quite permissible, quite in line with the Lord’s will, as we go on we come to find that even those things have come into a realm of question, the Spirit is not agreeing with them now. We have come to discover that He never did agree with them, but we were not enough alive to Him to know His mind about them. He deals with us as with children as long as we are children, but when it is time that we should leave childhood the Spirit begins to deal with us very drastically if we are going on with the Lord. It is this kind of people that the Lord is after in this age. Oh, what a difference it would make if all the Lord’s people were really governed by this law of the Spirit of life in Christ, whose hearts were truly circumcised, that all the fruit of life should be wholly unto God; because this law of the Spirit is not outward, but inward.

I wonder if you are feeling the Lord touch your hearts in this matter? I am so anxious not just to heap words upon words and truths upon truths. I do feel the Lord wants to do something, not just to say things, and it does matter above everything else whether we are able to take account of the voice of the Spirit rather than to be actuated and governed by even the Christian and evangelical world around us. Yes, even in the evangelical world Christianity has become a very set thing; it has become fixed as an order, a system of things; you have to conform to it, and if you do not, well, you are not sound or you are in some way heretical. No, we shall not go wrong in being governed by the Spirit; but even there many good Christians may not be able to understand. Are you prepared for that? It is not conformity to a system of teaching or truths that is needed, but to be able to take account of the movement of the Spirit of God. That will not make us independent, a law to ourselves: the Lord will attend to that. But oh, it is more important than anything else in these days the Lord should have a people who know the Spirit, who hear His voice and follow Him; and all who do that will move in the same direction, will flow together. We said earlier that the reason for so much division and conflict is the fact that the Spirit is not Lord. Other things are Lord—Christian interests are Lord, interpretations are Lord, mental

appraisements are Lord, all sorts of things have taken Lordship. Where the Spirit is Lord, we shall speak and think the same thing, there will be no mere individualism.

I think I must stop there. Let us listen to what the Spirit says. Let us ask the Lord to make very sure in us that we are not being

moved in our lives, in the course that we are taking, by what is religiously natural, but that we are really children of the Spirit and know the Spirit and are in conformity to God's thought for this present dispensation, true children of Abraham according to the Spirit.

T.A.-S.

## For Boys and Girls

### Gospel Messages from the Antarctic (No. 6)

*"He that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal" (John xii. 25).*

**I**N our last talk together we spoke of the great difficulty of food supplies in the Antarctic, and said that the ponies which were used in pulling the sledges on the journey to the South Pole were later killed in order to provide food for the dogs. Perhaps you felt very sorry about that and wished the ponies could have come back alive. But had they done so they would not have served the expedition so well. The real truth is that their death was no accident; for when Capt. Scott was planning what was needed in the way of stores, transport, etc., before ever he set out from this country at all he decided to take the ponies and to kill them when they had done their work. He knew how hard it would be to arrange food supplies on the journeys over the ice and snow. He wanted the ponies' help in pulling the sledges loaded with food, and he knew that at a certain point the best help they could give to the whole expedition would be to give up their lives so that their flesh could be used for feeding others—dogs and men. And so he calculated carefully how far he required to take the ponies and when they should die. So although they did not know it, the ponies went to the Antarctic on purpose to labour, to suffer and then to die.

It was a sad business for all concerned. The journey over the ice was very difficult, and the ponies suffered greatly. They grew weaker and weaker, but they struggled on bravely. One by one their strength—or the food available for them—came to an end, and there was nothing for it but to kill the ponies. Jehu was the first to be shot; then Chinaman; then Christopher, the pony who had been a continual trouble from the beginning. Even after he had been shot, instead of dying on the spot he charged away, bit one of the men, and had to be recaptured and led back to the place of execution. He was not going to die if he could help it! Then followed Victor; then

Michael, who had the awkward habit of eating anything he could get hold of, including the rope that tethered him and the rug that covered him. The remaining ponies, after terrible hardships, reached the appointed end of their journey, and there at a place which the men called "Shambles Camp" sadly they were killed—Jimmy Pigg, Snatcher, Nobby, Bones, and Snippets. They had been a gallant, though troublesome, team and had finished their task. They had worked hard and suffered much. If they could have chosen for themselves they would not have died, but their lives were taken unwillingly from them and their flesh became a very valuable addition to the store of food for the men and dogs who had still to complete the journey.

Christopher was always a nuisance—he never would do what was required of him. But if by some means he could have been made to know that at the end of his labour and suffering he was to give up his life for the sake of others I think he would have been more troublesome still, and would have refused to go forward at all. So would the other ponies; and so, I fear, would you and I. We all want to keep our lives, not to lose them. And that brings me to the point of this story.

The Lord Jesus Christ toiled as hard as any man in the world; He suffered more than any other; but one of the things in which He was so different from every other man was this, that *He came into the world on purpose to die for others*. It was always before Him. He said that He had come "not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark x. 45). You know how He did die—by being crucified by wicked men. It looked as if they took away His life, just as the explorers took away the ponies' lives. But this was not so. Men could have had no power over Him if He had not given Himself into their hands. He said: "I am the good shepherd . . . I lay down my life for the sheep. . . . No one taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself" (John x. 14, 15, 18). He did not die, as the ponies did—because He could not help it—but because He deliber-



ately decided and chose to die. This is a great mystery—the mystery of infinite love; for He came into the world to save sinners, and He could save them only by dying for them. If He had loved His Own life and had desired to keep it He would have turned back and never completed the work His Father had given Him to do. But He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem knowing that He was to give up His life there—that “Shambles Camp” for Him was to be the place of the Cross. And there, having finished His work, He willingly laid down His life. “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John xv. 13). The Lord Jesus did more than that—“while we were enemies . . . while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. v. 10, 8).

Now “laying down the life” does not necessarily mean dying in the ordinary sense of that word. It may include that for some people, but probably not for most of us. But it does mean something that affects us all very closely. It means letting go our own rights and wishes and desires—seeking the good of others even at cost to ourselves—going God’s way instead of our own—saying No to self and Yes to God in everything—taking “I” to the Cross and reckoning it as dead. Paul called this “dying daily”—it was not the death of the body so much as the death of self. The Lord Jesus did this every moment of His life here, and the final act of His self-denial was to give His very body to be crucified for our sakes. This “dying daily” is what He meant when He spoke of a man “hating his life” (John xii. 25) or “losing his life” (Matt. x. 39) or “denying himself” (Luke ix. 23).

You will probably say at once “I could not do that, I love my life too much.” Exactly—that is our trouble; and it is serious, because our text tells us that “he that loveth his life loseth it.” But the Lord Jesus has commanded us to do as He did and to love as He loved. How can we hope to follow His example if it means “dying daily”? Well, He Himself is the answer to that problem, as to every other. For He not only said “I lay down my life,” but He also said “and I have power to take it again” (John x. 18). Having given up His life, He rose again from the dead; and the

life with which He rose He is able to share with others. It is this very life which He now gives to every one who is born again. It is His Own love-life. By this life we can do as He has done. We can love others; we can “deny” or “hate” ourselves; we can love God’s will; we can say with Paul “Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy” (Acts xx. 24). Please notice those two words—“with joy.” For we must not think of this way as one of only suffering and loss and sorrow. It has wonderful compensations even now. Why, only a few hours before He was crucified the Lord Jesus spoke of His own peace and joy (John xiv. 27; xv. 11) and these He gives to those who follow Him in the way of the Cross. These are the first rewards of following Him. And they are by no means all. Don’t forget that Nobby, Jimmy Pigg and the rest—even cantankerous old Christopher—by dying became food for others, and they teach us that even a life unwillingly laid down can be a blessing of a kind to others. How much more may we be a blessing if, by the enablement of the love-life of our Lord Jesus working within us, we gladly lay down our lives for others!

Moreover, the blessing that the ponies left by their death was very soon ended—all that can be said is that their flesh helped to keep the dogs and men alive until in their turn they died; and four of the men died only three months later—but the blessing that we receive and the blessing that we give to others by following the Lord Jesus in the laying down of our lives does not end with life in this world, but goes on for ever—for He said “He that loseth his life in this world *shall keep it unto life eternal*” (John xii. 25).

The boy or girl who follows the Lord Jesus most closely in this way of the life laid down will certainly be the first to reach the South Pole of the land “In Christ” which we are exploring. Will you pray that you may have grace to follow Him thus? Here is a prayer which He will surely answer if you pray it from your heart:

“O Saviour, loving Redeemer,  
Saviour, precious to me,

Grant me, I pray Thee, more of Thy Spirit,  
So that Thy love flows freely through me.”

G. P.

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*Continued on page 143*

## “God hath Spoken”

No. V.

“Them that have faith.” “Now faith . . .”

**Y**OU will have read many books and heard many addresses on the classic Hebrews Eleven: “The heroes of faith”; “The Roll-call of the Faithful”; and it is doubtful whether this chapter has ever been dealt with, in whole or in parts, without *examples* of and encouragement to faith being the point focused upon. And rightly so. But not often do we hear or read anything on it which makes the whole context of the letter the object. The chapter is usually taken in itself, with the first words of what follows often added.

What we desire to indicate here is that Chapter xi is really the Apostle’s gathering up of his whole theme as he begins to round off his letter. He has presented Christ “crowned with glory and honour.” God’s Son in uniqueness of sonship; and then he has shown the Divine thought of securing and bringing to glory many sons, not sharing that uniqueness, but being made partakers of His incarnation and through “adoption,” i.e., “child placing.” He has shown that everything of God in this dispensation is of a spiritual and heavenly nature, and not temporal and earthly. He has urged that spiritual fulness in Christ is the goal of the believer’s calling, and that it is terribly possible to fail of it, with grievous consequences.

Now, as to all this, and its values for God’s people, he shows, by triumphant examples, that faith is the link between calling and destiny, between Divine thought and its realisation.

### The Supreme Feature of the Life of Faith

is that the people of God are tested by their position. There is no more testing position than that to which believers are called in this dispensation. God has not promised us anything on this earth in this dispensation which will be our vindication before men, the literal and material justification of our abandonment of all for Him. The nearer we get to the Divine thought the further away do we get from what can be “written up,” pointed to, and advertised as the result of our work. Such things belong to the elementary stages of life, and God never prolongs them. His most abiding and solid work is underground where the sensation hunter cannot get at it, and where the publicity department will be hard

put to it. If faith is really *faith*, and if the end times are to be more testing as to faith than any others (and the Scriptures say emphatically that it will be so) then there will be much less in the consummation of things to relieve faith by sight than at other times. But this principle holds good at all times *when God is after something more than the superficial*. The people mentioned in our chapter were all tested by their position. This is most clearly seen in Abraham and in Israel with Moses. God was there and then acting on the line of material responses to faith, but they were severely tested by the position in which they were placed by God’s act.

This is a spiritual age, and it is that fact which constitutes the test which *very few* Christians are prepared to accept. If anything becomes big, or if it can be made so: if names of world fame and titles of worldly importance sponsor it, or if they can be persuaded to do so: how much is made of it all! How very gratified is that flesh when things appear to be going well! Yes, yes, we are still so much of this earth, and we have failed to see how very small the biggest thing here is when seen from even ten thousand feet up, to say nothing of God’s throne and His spiritual measure.

What our writer is really saying is that real measure is that of faith, because the realm into which we are now called is one in which there is nothing apart from faith. The first stage is now of faith, and so is every subsequent increase. The whole dispensation is an immense advance upward in Divine thought, and sets the background for something much more inward than ever before. In the previous dispensations everything was outward and tangible—sacrifices, altars, meeting places, priests, vestments, feasts, rewards, etc.; but in this age all these things are gathered into the all-inclusive “In Christ,” and are essentially spiritual aspects of the One Heavenly Man; to be known, enjoyed, and comprehended only by faith. The long generations of sentient gratification in religious things were in the very blood of these Hebrews, and they craved for the seen, the felt, the heard, the physical and emotional system of the past. Thus, all that is said from the beginning of the epistle is carried up to the most spiritual of all attributes—faith, which worketh by love.

The encumbering weights impeding the running in the race of Chapter xiii. i are the legal



aspects of external Law. The "sin which doth so easily beset" is doubt or unbelief, 'unfaith'; for "whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

Thus sin, in this letter, is resolved into a matter, not of morals, but of how much we reverse the nature of the dispensation by putting temporal elements and ideas in the place of spiritual. It may never have occurred to many that ritual, vestments, and ecclesiastical regalia and forms may be sin in this respect, that they undermine, supplant, or weaken the truly spiritual, and, rather than help faith, only act as crutches which keep people from having "their senses (spiritual faculties) exercised" (Heb. v. 14).

This leads on in the unbroken sequence of thought to what is—in our unfortunate, mechanical divisions of chapters—in Chap. xii. Here the "fathers of our flesh," and the "Father of spirits" are compared. Child-training ("chastening") unto "son receiving" (lit. "placing as sons") has to do with our spirits; not firstly with our bodies, or our souls. The spirit is the very new man himself with which God is linked by new birth. All God's paternal attentions are taken up with this "inner man of the heart." Spirit cannot really be fed with temporal things. The soul may be greatly stimulated by blessings in the temporal realm, but it is here that one of the most vital and far-reaching distinctions is made by the Word of God, and one most grievously overlooked by the vast majority of Christians; and especially is it the point of default by the majority of Christian leaders. It is thought that if there is much soul stimulation along the lines of emotion, feeling, and 'zeal' or enthusiasm: reason, argument, information to the mind: and action, work, drive, volition: this is essentially the mark of spiritual life. In the New Testament it is the other way round; there was a deep inward work of the Holy Spirit in those days, before the effects—the instruction or teaching, the zeal, and the works. To put the cart before the horse in this matter may be just Satan's great illusion by which he brings about the most deadly reactions, so that the afterward is more hopeless than before. It may be well at this point to give a reminder that Satan's point of the conquest of man was man's soul—reason, argument: desire, feeling: volition, choice, action. Through and by his soul man capitulated to a course of unbelief, which severed his *spirit* from fellowship with God. (God is spirit, not soul. When God is referred to as having soul, it is only speaking after the manner of men, not actually the truth about God.) The un-

doing or destroying of the works of the devil in man and in a new race will be by rebirth of man's spirit in union with God by the Holy Spirit, and by that being "joined to the Lord, one spirit" to make for the full growth of a spiritual man (Heb. v. 14, vi. 1. R.V.) thus bringing the soul into captivity with its moods, variations, and its inherent weakness toward doubt. The "dominion" of chap. ii is now reserved unto *spiritual* people, and this is the heart of the whole letter to the Hebrews with its particular connection, as it is the heart of the whole New Testament in its manifold application.

The "placing as sons," which is the issue of "child-training" is spiritual "full-growth." Here is the link between chapters xi and xii. It was not only what those heroes of faith did through faith, but what they attained unto. There was a Divine "perfection" as the goal of fellowship with God. The word "perfect" (Gk. "complete") is used eight times in this letter.

"To make the captain of their salvation perfect" (ii. 10).

"Having been made perfect, he became . . . the author of eternal salvation" (v. 9).

"The law made nothing perfect" (vii. 19), etc.,

and thus, having shown the object of God, and incidentally of this letter, the writer brings us to two consummate statements:

a. "Apart from us they should not be made perfect" (xi. 40).

b. "Ye are come . . . to the spirits of just men made perfect" (xii. 23).

We leave the second till later, only noting again where completeness lies.

So, with all their faith and its manifold and wonderful expression two things issued:

a. They "received not the promise," but "died (still) in faith." They awaited completion or completeness; the full fruit of their faith had yet to ripen and be gathered.

b. "The spirits of (these) just men made perfect." "Apart from us they should not be made perfect" (made complete). Note: This is not numerical completeness; that we were necessary to be added to them. That *might* be true, but it is not what is meant here. It is their own completeness.

Something then has happened between their dying and our time. Yes; their faith was, in its essence, prospective. It looked on. See statements as to this in the record of Chap. xi, etc. What did it look on to? Well, with



greater or lesser clearness and definiteness it linked with the Christ, their Vindicator, their Redeemer, their Prince. This *link* of faith—not abstract faith, but its Divine Object—made it justifying faith; “it was accounted unto (them) for righteousness.” Hence they are “just,” or justified men, and their faith carried them over centuries to the Justifier, to our day; and in the “perfect”—finished, full and final—work and speech of God in Christ (Heb. i. 2) they, with us who have faith, are made complete, and their spirits are in the rest of faith. This is all so much of a piece with

the whole letter that we are considering, as will be seen.

So. “Faith is the assurance (confidence, giving substance to) of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen.” Someone has translated it “the title deeds” of things hoped for. Then the inheritance is now—in length—in possession.

In our next chapter we shall have something more to say on this matter, drawing upon Chap. xi, as we move to the second part of Chap. xii.

T.A.-S.

## “How Know We the Way?”

*John xiv. 5.*

**T**HE chapter in which the above words occur is a chapter of questions. Mental perplexity prevails on the side of the disciples. Strange things are being said to them; things which represent the complete reversal of all their deeply rooted ideas; things which turn their world of expectation upside down. Disappointment, despair, disillusionment, and grief strive to submerge them. “We know not.” “How know we?” “Show us.” “What is come to pass?” These are some of their bewildered ejaculations. But they are only a very few of the many questions which are covered by the comprehensive answer. Indeed, a whole future life is embraced by what these questions elicit from the Lord.

I. Firstly, He makes it clear that the answer to their questions is not—in the first instance, nor in itself at all—a matter of teaching, doctrine, truths, or traditions, but union with a Divine Person; “I am”; “He that hath seen me, hath seen . . .” To have a living union with Christ in some indefinable way brings the answer to all questions. That is a statement of fact, and we shall wallow in our mental quagmire, and get deeper and deeper, until we come to know by living relationship through spiritual new birth that all-inclusive Person.

II. The next thing in the answer is that the Way is inside. “I come to you.” “I in you.” It is not a matter of precepts and legal systems imposed from the outside; but One dwelling within Who is the power of the Way. The Way, the How, the What is all answered by a Life Way, a Truth Way, Who governs from within, and just *makes* us know. This is not conscience. Conscience says different things to different people. To the conscience of one a thing is wrong; to another there is no trouble about that thing (see I Cor. x. 23-33).

But Christ within will say the same thing to all, and everything becomes a matter of obedience to Him. This may deliver from the bondage and tyranny of an imperfectly enlightened and instructed conscience, and all the terrors and misery suffered therefrom.

III. How do we know anything at all as to God’s mind, as to right and wrong according to it? The answer here is: “I am the . . . life” (v. 6). “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you” (v. 27). In brief, it is by life and peace within, or the contrary. When we are in the will of God, when He has gained His place over our own will, there is a sense of life and peace. When there is conflict between our wills, our ways, our souls and God, there is unrest and inward death. The Lord in John xiv is speaking of the coming day of the Spirit (in which we now live) and He says, “He shall be in you.” The Spirit witnesses to the will of God by life. We *know* God and Christ in terms of what they are—life; and where that life is dominant there is peace.

IV. Then there comes the change from head to heart. “Love”—verses 23, 24, 28. “Heart”—1, 27. A heart relationship, i.e., that of love: not a head relationship, i.e., that of question: is the key to spiritual knowledge. Love for Christ opens the door to His self-revelation and impartation.

V. The place of faith. Verses 1, 10, 11, 12: In effect the Lord says, If you will trust Me, trust My Spirit within you, I will see that you get where I would have you—“I *am* the way”; I will see that you come to know all that is necessary to realise the purposes of my Father—“I am the truth”; I will see that you do not go under but triumph—“I am the life,” and “Because I live, ye shall live also.”

T.A.-S.

## The Strategy of God

*Reading: Job xxiii. 8-14.*

*"He hideth himself" (v. 9).*

*"He knoweth the way that I take" (v. 10).*

*"He performeth that which is appointed for me" (v. 14).*

### The Initial Move with God

THIS is one of the most remarkable books of the Bible for quite a number of reasons, and we may well be thankful that God had it written, placed it in His Book and has preserved it throughout all these generations. It has a very great purpose to serve in His thought, and when you come to the remarkable things in it, the first is that in this whole drama—for it is nothing less than Divine drama—God took the initiative. It is important and helpful to remember that. I think a lot of people have thought that the Devil took the initiative, but it does not say so; it says, "When the sons of God came to present themselves before Jehovah . . . Satan also came among them. And the Lord said unto Satan . . . Hast thou considered my servant Job?" (i. 6, 8). God took the initiative; God drew the attention of Satan to this man; God drew out what Satan thought about Job. It was the initiative of the Lord, not the initiative of the Devil. I say that is a very remarkable and forceful thing when you see all that follows. Evidently to the Lord Job had a very great significance, and He drew Satan's attention to that significance and then allowed it to be submitted to Satan's onslaughts.

I am not going to follow that in any full way, but I do believe that in some measure it is true of every child of God and of the saints as a body who stand upon true spiritual ground, that there is a great significance to the Lord bound up with them, and that He allows—I was almost going to say submits them to—the onslaughts of Satan for the bringing out of that significance to His own glory.

Before we come to the particular phrases which we have underlined, we might just indicate one or two aspects of the great significance of the life of Job.

### God's Object in His Strange Dealings with His Children

First of all, God was intending to establish and reveal a ground upon which Satan is undone and worsted and brought to the end of

his power. It is interesting to note the disappearance of the Devil from the book of Job. He is very much in evidence in the beginning. You hear no more about him after a while, and in the end, while he is not referred to, everything indicates that he has been completely put to flight and to shame.

Now I have said I am not going to follow that through, but that is absolutely true with regard to the Church. The final issue of the Church after its time of tribulation, trial, suffering, affliction is this, that Satan is cast out; and the object of God's strange, mysterious, deep and sometimes almost unbearable ways with the Church (the true Church, His people) is to bring about that issue. Some people think that when you come to the book of Revelation, Chapter xii, Satan is cast down from heaven in order to make room for the saints. That is just the wrong way round. The saints reach there and he is cast out; he is never cast out until the saints get there. When the Man-child reaches the Throne, Satan is cast out. That is the point. That chapter is a chapter of travail, the culmination of suffering. The Church comes to the glory and Satan is forced out of the heavens. And that is one of the big issues here in this book of Job, explaining everything.

### God Deals with His Children According to His Knowledge of Them

As to Job himself—and this brings us very much nearer to this chapter—God is clearly seen here as dealing with His servant according to His Own deeper knowledge of the man, a knowledge deeper than the man had of himself. Job had a certain conception of himself, and outwardly he was right. God's summing up of him to Satan was that he was not wrong so far as outward things were concerned. He was a perfect and upright man (Job i. 8), there was none like him in all the earth if it were a matter of outward righteousness and good acts, and that was the realm in which Job lived. But God knew him inwardly in a way in which Job did not know himself, and dealt with him according to that deeper knowledge. All that I am going to say about that for the moment is this, that when the Lord really does get us in hand and deal with us, when He does allow Satan to assail and almost torment us, the result will be seen, not only finally in one great ascent, but in this—that progressively and from time to time

we recognise and acknowledge that the Lord has dealt with us quite rightly and in the only way suitable to us, and that we have been coming to see what we did not know or believe about ourselves. He does not standardize His methods and deal with all His people in exactly the same way. What to one would be acute agony, to another would be very little trouble at all. The Lord knows us, He knows the secret pride of our hearts, the conceits about us which we would never believe about ourselves and would never allow anyone else to point out—and if they did, we would be untouched. He deals with us according to His knowledge; and in the end, in honesty of heart we have to say, The Lord's way with me was the only way in which He could deal with me and get me where He wanted me. That is, we have come to see that we had certain tendencies, propensities, certain perils in our makeup, and these had to be met and dealt with in a peculiar way. The way in which the Lord has dealt with them was the only way in which they could be dealt with.

That is one of the secrets of this book of Job. Job did not know himself inwardly, good man though he was, and you notice as the Lord puts him through the fires he is beginning to acknowledge things that he would never acknowledge before. In the end, this man, who had earlier told the story of his own goodness, and stood so strongly on the ground of all the kind things he had done—how he had never failed to answer to need where he saw it—in the end he says, "Wherefore I abhor myself" (Job xlii. 6); and although it is not so stated, it can be concluded that Job would have said, The Lord has taken the only way by which He could bring me to the place where He wanted me. The Lord had to deal with him according to His Own knowledge of him. That is what He is doing with us all.

I wonder how many of us here are now able to say, with a little knowledge of ourselves, as we begin to know our own peculiar makeup and perils and peculiarities and weaknesses, that the way the Lord has been dealing with us is the only way in which we could be dealt with effectively? It is a very great thing as we are able to come to that position, because the heart acknowledgment is just this—He is faithful and true! He is faithful with us because He knows us, and He is true to us because He knows us. That is, in faithfulness and truth He is dealing with us according to what He knows of us which we do not know of ourselves, and which we can never accept from anyone else. That is an issue of this book, and it is a great issue to come to

the place where we justify God even against ourselves.

### God Working to Produce Eternal Spiritual Values

But then one other thing in general. God was making something of tremendous spiritual value for posterity in His dealings with Job. The story of this book is the story of God's producing something which for all ages was going to be of great spiritual value. You cannot fail to recognise how universal this book is, and how almost timeless it is. It is evidently a patriarchal book—that is, it belonged to the time of the patriarchs, probably the time of Abraham. Job was a Gentile living away somewhere by the Euphrates. He is a mysterious man. How did he come to know God and offer sacrifices? Those sacrifices were never on the Levitical basis. He offered sacrifices lest his sons should have sinned. This is not the mediatorial sacrifice of the Lord. There is no reference whatever to anything like the law of Moses and the sacrifices we have later. It is much earlier than that, it goes right back to the beginning of things. How universal and continuous it is! This scene in the heavens comes into view again and again. Right up to Ephesians you have it, warfare in the heavenlies, an interest in this earth in the heavenlies; and in that great universal, spiritual realm, covering all time—not just the life of a man in some remote place on the earth—God was doing something to produce values for His people right on to the end. Who is there among the Lord's true people who has never been helped by this book? The more you look into it and think about it, the more powerful is its ability to help you spiritually. This book of Job is of tremendous value to the Church. All I mean to indicate by that suggestion is that in these dealings with us by God, He is producing something of lasting spiritual value to serve others. It may be that some of us are going through something in a spiritual way like that through which Job went—disappointment, deprivation, so that God seems to be against us and the language of our hearts is Job's—"Oh that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat! I would set my cause in order before him and fill my mouth with arguments" (xxiii. 3, 4). This is the common complaint of the heart under trial. What is the Lord doing with us when He handles us like that, so deeply, so terribly? He is producing something spiritual to be of service to others. This is to be stock in trade for the saints—and not only in the short duration of this life here on earth. "His ser-



vants shall serve him, and they shall see his face" (Rev. xxii. 3). There is work to be done, and the spiritual measure to which we attain here is the measure in which we are going to be of use to the Lord afterward, and so the fires become very intense for some; but He is producing something of abiding value for others. That is one of the issues of this book.

### God's Hiding of Himself

Now right in that setting come these words which we hardly need to dwell upon. Firstly, "He hideth himself." I doubt whether there is one of us who does not know something of the poignancy that lies in that statement. "He hideth himself." That is one of our greatest occasions of suffering, the fact that the Lord hides Himself. Our cry all the time is that He will show Himself, come out into the open, let us see Him and see what He is doing. But "He hideth himself." He was enshrouded in the mystery of His ways with His beloved servant. In all the values of this book, this is not one of the smallest, that God could say of a man that he is perfect and upright and there is none like him in all the earth, and then could hide Himself from that man. You see the point. Oh, the misrepresentation of God and of Job which this book brings out! This is one of the things which God set Himself to destroy out of hand. This misrepresentation came through Job's friends. They were pious men, in their way godly men, who said some very lovely things—and yet they were used by the Devil as instruments against this choice servant of God. (A problem arises here, which we make no attempt now to answer. Were the things spoken by these men Divinely inspired utterances? Can we take them as Scripture? "Lay thou thy treasure in the dust . . . and the Almighty will be thy treasure" (Job xxii. 24-25)—is that an inspired utterance, can we take our stand on that? That is something to be fulfilled as the Word of God, and yet that—and many another equally lovely thing—was uttered by men of whom God said in the end "Ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right" (xlii. 7).) Here is a man of whom God can say that he is perfect and upright. *Naturally* He can never say that about you and me, or about any one of us—though thank God He can say it of us *in Christ*. Yet He could say it of Job naturally as to outward life. He could say finally of Job that he had said the thing which was right. "Ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath." God could speak so at the beginning and at the end about this man, and draw Satan's attention to him as the most perfect man on

the earth, and then hide Himself from him in the time of his anguish. I say the precious thing about that is that God's hiding does not always mean that God is against you; it does not mean what these men interpreted it to mean, that God had a controversy with Job and that there must be some deep, awful, secret sin in his life which he was hiding or to which he was blind but which the eyes of God could see. That is all false, says God: this man is perfect and upright; and yet under the accusation of pious men, under the assaults of the devil to this man's anguish, God hid Himself.

Have you had one boil? You know the misery and the pain. Job was a man covered from head to foot with these things. That was only one phase of his suffering. Children gone, flocks and herds gone, camels gone, his home gone, his friends gone, and his wife turned against him saying, "Renounce God, and die." Job was left like that. And God, affirming this man's perfection and integrity, still hides Himself. "He hideth himself." What is our case compared with Job's? The Lord deals with us in the same way; He hides Himself. He must have an object which far outweighs all the dangers of the possibility of His being misunderstood and misinterpreted. His servant was given plenty of occasion to say, God is unfaithful, unloving, unrighteous; He has turned against me; and so on. But God ran the risk of it because He saw something of value which far outweighed all that. He knew that in the long run He would be justified and not condemned. "He hideth himself." Do not think, my beloved, tried, pressed brother or sister, that the fact that Satan assails and things are so difficult and hard means of necessity that you are under judgment. Even if you are standing on the ground in Christ of righteousness from God, and are not persisting in a known course of wrong over which the Lord has a controversy with you; even if you are able to say, I stand not on any ground of my own, but on the ground of His righteousness through faith, and I repudiate all known, habitual sin: even then it does not mean that God is necessarily coming out to you to show Himself always very wonderful. He may hide Himself, and those who mean well may interpret that fact the other way. It is one of the most difficult things to bear when calamity falls; people will come along and say, The Lord must have some cause for judging you, you must lie under some condemnation for Him to allow that. "He hideth himself."

### God's Knowledge of our Way in Spite of His Hiding-

The verses with which we began suggest a

picture. Here is Job, as it were, going along a road. It looks to him like a road through a forest, and the Lord is somewhere in the vicinity and Job is looking for Him. He says, The Lord has hidden Himself somewhere in this forest, He is deliberately keeping out of my way; I sometimes seem to see an indication that He is doing something, and I immediately turn first in this direction and then in that, but I cannot find Him. He is hiding in the wood and He will not be found by me, but He is watching from His hiding place. "He knoweth the way that I take." While He is hiding, He is not disregarding; while He is hiding, He is not ignoring; while He is hiding, He is not forgetting.

### God's Sovereign Working

Nay, more; He is not only hiding and looking out and knowing all about me, but He is

instigating it all. "He performeth that which is appointed for me." He is not only a hidden watcher, He is a hidden actor, the prime actor, because the cause, the author, the perfecter. "He performeth that which is appointed for me: and many such things are with him." Oh, the faith of Job in the sovereignty of God through it all! "He hideth"—yes; but "He knoweth"—yes; but more, "He performeth." Let us take all the comfort these words should bring to us as individuals and as the Church as we pass through the time in which God is doing things of which we have no knowledge. He is answering a whole universe in His dealings with us, getting through to issues of tremendous account. May our faith be sufficient to believe it and to hold on to this—that "When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."

T. A-S.

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